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BRONSON ALCOTT,
TEACHER

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A. BRONSON ALCOTT

BRONSON ALCOTT
TEACHER

by

DOROTHY McCUSKEY

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1940

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FOR MY FATHER

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

As its contribution to the celebration of the centennial of the Common School Revival Kappa Delta Pi, an Honor Society in Education, offered its Third Research Award of one thousand dollars to the author of the best study on a significant phase of the history of American education. A committee from the Society's Laureate Chapter, composed of distinguished contributors to history of education, was requested to select the study adjudged best among the many submitted in competition for the award. The members of this committee were: Dr. Ellwood P. Cubberley, Dean Emeritus of the School of Education, Leland Stanford University; Dr. I. L. Kandel, Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University; and Dr. Paul Monroe, Professor Emeritus of Education of Teachers College, Columbia University and President of the World Federation of Education Associations. This committee recommended that *Bronson Alcott, Teacher* by Dr. Dorothy McCuskey receive the award. The amount of the award was handed to Miss McCuskey at the annual dinner of Kappa Delta Pi in St. Louis on the evening of February 27, 1940. The study is based upon the author's doctoral thesis written under the direction of Professor John S. Brubacher of the School of Education, Yale University.

Although selected for its intrinsic value it is a happy coincidence that the study has as its subject the life and work of a great teacher. Popularly, Bronson Alcott has long been known as the father of the "little women." In this particular his fame has been secondary to that of his famous daughter, Louisa. More recently, Bronson Alcott has become better known as a unique representative of an age and area from

which stem many of the fruits of American culture. Professor Odell Shepard in *Pedlar's Progress* portrays Bronson Alcott as a member of the New England group within which grew to eminence such men as Ralph Waldo Emerson. Bronson Alcott has been called "the genteel transcendentalist" even more faithful to this philosophy of spiritual enlightenment than Emerson himself. In referring to him as a "missionary of culture" Miss McCuskey complements Professor Shepard's portrait of him as a "pedlar." If the expression is permitted, Alcott was a "pedlar of culture." Certainly during most of his life he was an itinerant. He closed his long career as one of the most popular lecturers of his generation.

Bronson Alcott, however, was eminently the teacher. He loved children. He labored and suffered in behalf of his several small schools. Although for a brief period he was a school superintendent his career was that of teacher. He began to teach at an early age. His reading, studies, thinking, and labor centered in his conception of education as a pleasant and inspiring experience for young children. In the spirit of Pestalozzi he created schools that anticipated modern elementary schooling at its best. Not a leader in the sense of having won followers in his own day, or even later, Bronson Alcott lived to teach; and he taught more by the example of his loyalty to a clear vision of child life than by classroom techniques, effective as the latter were, particularly in the Temple School. As a teacher, dedicated to the high calling of teaching children to think by inspiring them to face a rich variety of problems, Alcott ran afoul of misunderstanding and intolerance. He was persecuted and eventually denied by community prejudice the right to engage in the work that his very being craved.

It is obvious in Miss McCuskey's portrait of Bronson Alcott that he was in large measure a victim of his own naïve trust in his fellowmen and of his faith in the magnetic power of sincerity to win confidence in his cause of illuminating

the young mind. The transcendentalist neither would nor could compromise with the temporal or the expedient. The authority of the spirit could not surrender to conforming servility of the flesh. One of the deeply moving heroisms of Alcott's troubled life was his effort to eke out a bare living by means of truck gardening all the while he dreamed of other gardens, children's hearts and minds, that he envisioned with the blooms and fruits of enlightened character. As one reads the story the wonder grows that his protests against the inhumanity of man were so few and so tempered with kindness and forbearance.

In the present biography Bronson Alcott emerges from the pages of his own numerous Journals. An outcome of many years of painstaking research among original sources the present study is not only a portrait of a master teacher but a canvas of the life and times of a New England not far removed from the prejudices and intolerance toward teachers in our own day. When some day the human story of teaching in America is written with all of its pathos and tragedy, its courage, devotion and sacrifice—as well as humor—Bronson Alcott, the teacher, will tower among the millions who have given loyal devotion to a cause that demands increasingly public understanding and intelligent cooperation. To this larger story also, *Bronson Alcott, Teacher* is a scholarly and stirring contribution.

ALFRED L. HALL-QUEST,
Editor

Kappa Delta Pi Publications

P R E F A C E

THIS book attempts to set forth the educational theories and practice of a man whose career stretched through most of the nineteenth century. Bronson Alcott was one of the most talked-of men of his day, and yet the histories of education pass over him in silence. His life and work, however, are of interest partly as a mirror of his time, partly in relation to education today. This importance becomes clear, not in the little printed volumes which describe Alcott's teaching, but in the long series of manuscript journals hitherto in the main inaccessible to scholars.

This study is based upon the Alcott collection of manuscripts and was written in the winter of 1935-1936, when it was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Yale University. As Professor Odell Shepard has pointed out in the Foreword to *Pedlar's Progress*, we were using the manuscripts at the same time and were in constant consultation on points of interpretation. Since that time Mr. Shepard has also published his edition of *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, and in the present revision I have now added references to these two books, wherever material taken originally from the manuscripts is now made accessible there.

The main series of Journals consists of some fifty bound volumes, extending from 1826 to 1882. The Journals for 1840-1845, however, are missing, so that the account of those years has had to be supplemented from other sources. Some of the Journals are written in the clear, flowing script suggestive of the Wolcott writing-master; others in a crabbed little hand probably designed to save space in the days when

paper was scarce. Though I have endeavored to follow Alcott's spelling and capitalization faithfully, there are doubtless errors in transcription, if only because of difficulty in interpreting some parts of the manuscript. I have not edited or changed the manuscript, except to remove occasional obstructive punctuation.

Though Alcott's Journals form the basis of this study, other materials in the Alcott manuscript collection have also been of great aid. The "Autobiographical Collections" of ten volumes contains pictures, clippings, reviews of books, lists of pupils and patrons, and similar items that are valuable. The volumes of "Correspondence" and "Letters" include many letters from people of note, including patrons of the school, William Russell, Samuel J. May, and Emerson. Three volumes of "Western Itineraries" contain rough notes from which the Journals for those years appear to have been compiled. A single volume, entitled "Autobiography, 1834," contains miscellaneous biographical data for that general period of Alcott's life, and one entitled "Memoir, 1878" was collected for the purpose of writing an account of Mrs. Alcott. "Psyche, 1838" is the final draft of the work based upon Alcott's observations of his children, and "Papers on Education" is a bound volume, which in addition to some of Alcott's pamphlets also includes helpful material on James P. Greaves. I have also examined the volumes in Alcott's private library.

To Mr. Frederic Wolsey Pratt, great-grandson of Bronson Alcott, and present owner of the Alcott Journals, for his gracious permission to study the manuscripts and to quote from them, I owe a debt not repaid by mere acknowledgment. To Professor and Mrs. Odell Shepard, of Trinity College, Hartford, my obligation is most deep, not only for my introduction to the inner circle of Alcott workers, and for invaluable suggestions in the composition of this study, but also for unfailing encouragement and hospitality. To

the combined, and individual efforts of the entire Faculty of the Department of Education, Yale University, I am conscious of owing an intellectual debt, apart from that personal one which their cordial and friendly interest has occasioned. Professors Clyde M. Hill and John Seyler Brubacher, who guided the preparation of my dissertation, and Professor Sidney Cox, of Dartmouth College, who has read part of the revised manuscript, deserve particular thanks. To Miss Sarah Bartlett, Librarian of the Concord Free Public Library, to Miss Anne S. Pratt, Reference Librarian of the Sterling Memorial Library, and to the staffs of these and many other libraries, I am grateful for aid.

For permission to use copyrighted and manuscript material I should like to thank Miss Clara Endicott Sears, Odell Shepard, Frederic Wolsey Pratt, Professor Ralph L. Rusk and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association.

To Kappa Delta Pi, who has honored this book with its Third Research Award, and to Dr. Alfred L. Hall-Quest, for his editorial assistance, I am most grateful.

D.Mc.

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BRONSON ALCOTT,
TEACHER

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CHAPTER I

YEARS OF PREPARATION

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is
old, he will not depart from it." *Solomon.*

IN 1835 and 1836 people crossing the Boston Common often noticed a tall, fair, handsome man with his two small daughters, one quite fair, the other dark. People bowed and smiled, and stopped to talk, for this man was Bronson Alcott, master of one of the outstanding schools in the city. The children of the Shaws, the Quincys, the Jacksons attended this school, and so the world in general was assured of its excellence. When visitors from other parts of the country, or from abroad, came to Boston, they were taken to Bronson Alcott's school as the best the city could offer. Alcott enjoyed this approbation but it did not interest him greatly, for the general public knew little about the real nature of his school.

Alcott was more concerned with what men like William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, Samuel May, and Ralph Waldo Emerson thought about his school, for these men might be expected to understand its true purposes. Alcott had chosen for his motto the words of Jesus, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," and he meant it very literally. For he believed that from these children—their divine intuitions unsullied by the world—he might learn of the nature of God. He believed that Spirit, its cultivation, its guidance, was the important thing in man's life, and so his school was an attempt to teach children to live in accordance with the dictates of their consciences.

Some of the clergymen who visited Alcott's school felt very strongly that the experiment of engaging children upon questions of divine truth was successful. One of these was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Other clergymen, however, thought it decidedly unseemly, if not heretical, that this layman and these children should be talking about Jesus. They themselves would do that, on Sunday mornings and evenings, and they were not especially anxious for help. But Alcott was serene, for he knew, as his friend Emerson knew, that he was laying colossal foundations "not for summer-houses, but for temples and cities."

Bronson Alcott held a unique position among the men whose basic beliefs caused them to be called transcendentalists, for he was the "doer" of the group. His school was the practical exemplification of the theories these thinkers expressed in their conversations, their books, their sermons. They believed that man, being a creature of God, might know Him directly; and Alcott founded a school that he might train children to look to God in their consciences. Believing, too, in the inherent divinity and goodness of man, Alcott treated the children in his school with the same reverence and courtesy the rest of the world accorded to a minister of the Gospel.

A year later, however, there was little cordiality toward Bronson Alcott and his daughters Anna and Louisa on the Common. It would hardly do to be seen speaking to a man whose books about his school had been proclaimed "indecent." He had been forced into bankruptcy, but that could be overlooked, for many of his wealthier clients had had a similar experience in the panic of April, 1837. Few visitors came to his school. His large airy room was exchanged for a smaller, darker one; and the luxurious furniture, the statuary, and the calf-bound library had gone under the auctioneer's hammer. Alcott was the same though. A little tired and troubled, perhaps, but he still listened

with the same gracious patience to the opinions of the children. There were not many of them left. The school for the development of spiritual culture had failed. Or had it?

Within a year, Bronson Alcott experienced the heights of real and popular success, and the nadir of financial failure and scurrilous personal attacks. Through both extremes he remained the same man—serene, hard-working, determined. Few people of his time understood Bronson Alcott. They thought him impractical, foolish, fanatical. He was none of those things. Bronson Alcott differed from the rest of the world in just one important respect—he believed that principles, once adopted, were meant to be put into action. For himself, he had adopted the principles of Jesus, and all his life he lived by them. “Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven,” said Jesus. His life Alcott dedicated to the service of Soul. In his school, in his writing, in his living, spiritual values were recognized as primary. Material things—food, raiment, worldly success—might come, or not come. They were genuinely unimportant. Like Jesus, Alcott would never temporize, even in the face of physical danger. In the cause of Principle, he was one of the founders of the Anti-Slavery Society. When a mob gathered to free a slave held in the Boston jail, it was Bronson Alcott alone who faced the guns to walk up to the door and inquire, “Why are we not within?” “Lay not up treasures for yourself on earth,” read Alcott in his New Testament. During the prosperous years of the Temple School, Alcott’s income was ample, but most of it went into the school. And in the years when there was practically no income, the food on hand was shared with others. The world had been talking about the principles of Jesus for some eighteen hundred years; but when Bronson Alcott began to apply them, very simply, very quietly, very determinedly, people were profoundly shocked. He was foolish, dangerous, heretical, or

indecent, according to the political and religious views of his neighbors.

How does such a man come to be? To understand Bronson Alcott at the height of his success, or to understand his serenity through long years of ridicule and criticism, one must go back to the years of preparation. For Bronson Alcott, there was the boyhood on the high hill, with wide expanses of the valleys stretching illimitably before him—a fitting place for the birth of a transcendentalist. There were years of hard farm work, of reading, and of idealistic dreaming; there were years of travel—hundreds of miles on foot; and there were years spent in teaching common schools. There were people, too. His father and mother, his cousin William, his friend William Russell, his wife Abba May, and her brother Samuel. As an old man, trying to understand his life, trying to write the biography of a Soul, Bronson Alcott began to see this. He looked up his ancestry, clear back to the Alcocks in England, and he revisited the scenes of his boyhood and young manhood. Thus he tried to put together the influences that had made him a man.

The tall, striking man whom Boston recognized as A. Bronson Alcott, philosopher, educator, reformer, and father of "Little Women," was born on Spindle Hill, Wolcott, Connecticut, November 29, 1799. His parents, Anna Bronson and Joseph Chatfield Alcock, named him Amos Bronson, and he was called Amos until he was twenty. Then he adopted what he considered a more euphonious form of the name, A. Bronson Alcott, dropping the Amos and changing the spelling of his last name.

It was good to be an Alcock on Spindle Hill. The boy's great-grandfather, John Alcock, had come up from New Haven and settled the hill in 1731. He acquired large holdings of over a thousand acres, which were distributed among

his eleven children. Large families were the order of the day—for example, Bronson's father was one of nine children and he had eight sons and daughters—and so in Bronson's boyhood there were Alcock aunts, uncles, and cousins all over the hill. This was important, for it meant that no matter where the boy went on the hill, there was a bit of home and family. It meant a sharing of such work and pleasures as quiltings, barn raisings, and harvesting.

It was good to have for a grandfather "Captain John" Alcock, who had fought in the Revolutionary War, and who was much in the public eye when the Wolcott militia paraded. Bronson's father was never in the public eye, for his is one of the few names that do not appear on the lists of the town office-holders, but he had a distinction of another sort. This silent, hard-working man was known as the keeper of the thriftiest farm on the hill, and most of the farms about were worked with tools made by Joseph Alcock.

Bronson's other grandfather, Amos Bronson, was a man of distinction in the Waterbury part of the country. He had built the Naugatuck turnpike, and lived in somewhat patriarchal style near there. His son Tillotson was Principal of the Cheshire Academy and one of the more prominent Episcopalian clergymen in the state. Anna Bronson, though not educated like her well-known brother, nevertheless had those qualities of spiritual grace and love which were so to distinguish her eldest son.

Like his mother, Bronson was blue-eyed and fair, and, even as a child, he was tall. He was quiet, though, and seemed contented to play around home. He was always doing things with his hands, and long before he went to school he was drawing with charcoal and marking letters on the broad planks of his mother's kitchen floor. This was allowed on wash-days, for then there was water for scrubbing. The broad whiteness of winter snows also proved a

practice ground for the penman who was later to fill acres of manuscript sheets.

Life was not very exciting in Wolcott. It was a law-abiding town and even the diversions of stocks and whipping posts were lacking. There was a blacksmith shop, a general store and tavern at the "Centre" on the eastern hill of the town. The roads were very bad and few farmers owned wagons. A man could hardly take all his family on one horse or even two, and so, mostly, people walked, or they stayed at home. Occasionally, excursions were made into the "outside world," as it was called. When Bronson was twelve, his father took him along to New Haven, where the sight of so many steeples, and many people, shops, ships, and the ocean quite overwhelmed the lad from the hills. Once, too, he went to Middletown for the family supply of shad; and once again, he went there to see a hanging. It was a mistake to go that time, however, for he fainted at the "turning-off."

It was to the plain little frame church at the "Centre" that the Alcotts went on Sunday. It was a long two miles down Spindle Hill, and two longer ones up to the Centre, but the family usually went, partly to hear the word of God, and partly, no doubt, to see their friends and neighbors. They started out proudly in homespun Sunday best, but with everyday shoes and stockings. Sunday ones were carried in hand, and were put on "at some private place on the road" so as to appear neat and clean at meeting. The church was crowded in those days, front seats being reserved for the elders, and the gallery chiefly filled with young folks. There the "tithing man" was always seated to be sure that no mischief took place. It was customary to take along sprigs of dill, fennel, and caraway to eat in meeting, a welcome diversion, no doubt, by the time the preacher had got to the "twenty-fifthly." Alcott remembered the minister as a "venerable man," revered by the elders of the congregation,

and greatly feared by the youngsters. His prayers, like his sermons, were never ending. By Alcott's time the congregation had given up singing individual tunes, and were endeavoring to unite on one, but "Old Hundred" and "Coronation" were difficult for country voices, and the pitch often had to be given twice.

After the service, the families streamed along the roads on foot. When well along the way, the everyday shoes went back on; and, once home, work day clothes were resumed. The dinner had been prepared mostly on Saturday, and the afternoon was devoted to the Bible—finding the text of the morning's sermon, studying, and reciting the Catechism. After sundown, there could be play, and Sunday evenings were traditionally reserved for courting.

Things changed in the little church, however. Some people, among whom was Joseph Alcock, did not like the extreme Calvinism of the pastor's sermons; and others resented the intense opposition to Jefferson and his policies. In fair weather, Anna Bronson had always enjoyed going by horseback down to the Episcopalian Church of her girlhood, St. John's in Waterbury. Her husband began to go with her, and, in 1808, he "signed off" from the established church in Wolcott. In 1811, Episcopalian services began to be held in the Wolcott schoolhouse, and in 1816 Bronson and his father were confirmed at St. John's in Waterbury.

Bronson's chief companion was his cousin William Andrus Alcott, who lived just diagonally down the road. William, a year older than Bronson, could hardly be called a playmate, for apparently he never played. But the two were inseparable, and throughout young manhood, as in boyhood, there was not one Alcott, but two, to be reckoned with. For one thing, the two went to school together, trudging the hot, unshaded road in summer, and braving the unchecked hilltop winds in winter. This little school, no better and no worse than most in the state, was supported

by the Connecticut School Fund, and there was school just so long as the money held out. In the summer, when chiefly the smaller children attended, the teacher was likely to be a woman, who would be paid sixty-two and a half cents, or perhaps even a dollar a week, for her services. In winter, when the older boys could be spared from the farms for a few months, there was need for a man, preferably a big man. His pay, unless he was well known as a "master" teacher, was likely to be from seven to eleven dollars a week. Unless he lived in the neighborhood, he would "board round," and there was a tradition that one teacher should not teach more than two terms in the same school. He might ask for a raise if he stayed longer.

The Spindle Hill school was a square little building, twenty-two by twenty feet, set at a crossroads on the top of the hill, so close to the carriage tracks that stones had to be set up to protect the building from the rubbing of the wheels. No trees sheltered it from the beating sun of summer, nor from the winds that blustered across the hilltop in winter. There were no out-buildings of any sort, no "places of retirement for either sex." The wood, which was contributed by the parents (when they did not neglect it), was piled by the edge of the road. It was often wet, and always green. The deep fireplace with a four-foot chimney would accommodate an eighth of a cord of wood at a time and commonly burned about a cord a week. This caused great suffering from the intense heat in the front, and from cold backs in the loosely-boarded rear of the room. Since it was but seven feet high, five windows of twelve panes each were deemed sufficient. When a pane was broken, a hat or scarf was commandeered to fill the opening. The scholars were seated on backless benches about three sides of the room, as the chimney took up most of the fourth. The larger pupils were seated around the outside, and ranged down to the smallest ones whose legs dangled from the

benches in the center. In the pit thus formed (and later occupied by the stove) the schoolmaster was lord, his ferule within easy reach.

Some of these schoolmasters showed a great deal of imagination in inventing fantastic methods of discipline. Anybody with a good right arm could apply the ruler to the mischievous youngsters and "females," and administer a regulation lickin' when needed. The ingenious masters, though, had pupils "sitting on nothing," their backs against the wall; or with a forefinger, "holding down a nail in the floor," in a painfully stooping position. Bronson Alcott, however, was an unusually well-behaved pupil, for he remembered being punished but once, and that not for his own misdeed.

Sometimes the Alcott boys got to school on time, and sometimes they did not. There were chores to be done at home, the weather might make the going hard, and besides, it did not make much difference. Punctuality was not yet established as a necessary virtue on the part of scholars. If one was to spend most of the morning writing, he could begin any time. Of course, on winter mornings it took quite a while to thaw out the homemade ink of maple and oak bark, steeped in alum, but that could be done while the teacher was "making the pens," and "setting the copy." Beginners usually practiced on straight lines, but for the others the master wrote a maxim such as *Avoid Alluring Company*. Pupils were expected not only to copy a full page of the maxims, but to take them to heart as well.

Reading could be done individually, or in small groups, while others were writing. Bronson Alcott had a *New Testament* and a copy of Nathaniel Dwight's *Geography* for his chief reading books, and later he acquired a copy of Caleb Bingham's *American Preceptor*. Although the New Testament was easier than the Old, it was often hard to twist one's tongue around the long words. Dwight's geography was ob-

viously patterned from the Catechism, and, like the model, was designed to inculcate in the young mind those facts and attitudes deemed desirable for the preservation of the *status quo*:

"Q. What are the general characteristics of the people of New England?

A. . . . They are plain and simple in their manners, and on the whole, they form perhaps the most pleasing and happy society in the world."¹

The study of geography as science rather than as reading material was introduced only after determined opposition. The sounds produced in reading classes of this day were said to be often intelligible neither to the listener nor to the speaker. The Alcott boys were fortunate, though, for their school reading was supplemented by acting as lay readers in the Episcopalian services, and they learned here, if not before, that reading was meant to be understood.

Spelling was the other main activity in this school, and of course Noah Webster's blue-backed "Speller" was used. As a matter of fact, a boy hardly needed any other book, for, in addition to "Easy Words of Three Syllables, accented on the Second," such as as-sas-sin, it contained "An Easy Standard of Pronunciation," a "Grammatical Institute of the English Language," a "Federal Catechism," and a "Moral Catechism." But better than these were the illustrated stories, such as "The Bear and Two Friends," and "Of the Boy that stole Apples." Learning to spell in this school was, however, purely a matter of memorizing combinations of letters. "Defining" was not yet in vogue.

Alcott owned a copy of Daboll's *Arithmetic*, and the subject was taught by a few of the more enterprising instructors,

¹ Nathaniel Dwight, *Geography*, Hartford, 1797, 150 f.

See the Chapter Bibliographies at the end for complete bibliographical information, and annotations for all important references, as well as for works cited in the notes.

but it was never a subject that interested the boy. School was kept on Saturdays as well as other days, but then out came the "Old Assembly Catechism," which was repeated both in the Congregational and in the Episcopal order.

These subjects, studied regularly until the boy was ten, and occasionally thereafter, seem a meager enough outline of education for a lad that thought scholars were "Heaven's Saints." There was not even a learned man in town to talk to the boy and lend him books. If he had happened to be born in Litchfield, for example, what resources of wealth there would have been in Lyman Beecher and his brilliant family, in Judge Tappan Reeve, who conducted a famous law school. Had he been born there, his friends might have been Horace Bushnell, famous preacher who originated the doctrine of "Christian nurture" as a substitute for violent conversion from sin; and Charles Wadsworth, another famous preacher now important as the inspirer of Emily Dickinson. But there were no such men on the "New Connecticut" hill.

There were, though, books—a hundred or so of them. There had once been a Parish Library in Wolcott, and now the boys diligently canvassed the neighborhood to see what books they could find remaining. In the cupboards and on the mantel-pieces of their friends and relatives they found first the stock pieces of culture—Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Cowper's *Works*, and Thomson's *Seasons*. Of these, Thomson seemed most interesting, but only until *Robinson Crusoe* was discovered. The greatest treasure of all, however, was *Pilgrim's Progress*. This was a book that struck home. Bronson and William read it, re-read it, copied it out, dramatized it; and, in short, lived it. It was a story that was never to grow old. The hard thing was to find time to read. "Noon-spells" were bounded by his father's pipe and nap, and winter evenings were short. Sundays were a help, though. His father could not understand this bookish trait in his son, and commented once that the boy worked

handsomely at whatever he undertook, but that he undertook nothing heartily but books. He thought, however, that it was something which would be outgrown.

To get more books, Bronson and William formed a miniature library, and to carry on the affair the boys started an "epistolary correspondence" that was to continue, with few interruptions, until William's death in 1859. One of these early letters read:

Wolcott,
September 8th, 1814.

Esteemed Sir,

In answer to yours of the 28th ult. which I received and read with the greatest pleasure; the more so, on finding that you concurred with me, concerning our "Literary Establishment." Hoping therefore, that you will pardon my negligence in not writing to you before this; and also, excuse these inelegant, vulgar words which are offered you. You wished me to 'appoint the place of our meeting,' but, you confer on me your own honors; while in fact it belongs to you to appoint it; however, the assembly, (if any) MAY meet at my Father's Dwelling House, if it is your option. You observed that such Books as 'Lives of Washington,' 'Franklin,' etc, would answer our purpose; I agree with you altogether. Money is scarce; but scarcer with us than it is at Plays and other Diversions. I should be willing myself to purchase another right, if we agree to continue the Business.

With the greatest respect
Yours

A. B. Alcox

His Imperial Highness

Wm. A. Alcox

Treas. and Librarian Minr. Liby.

This is hardly the blunt, coarse speech common to the neighborhood, nor is it the plain prose of John Bunyan. Where did the boys learn such elegance? It seems likely that James Burgh's *Dignity of Human Nature* may have been partly the cause. At least, Alcott later thought so. When he was twelve, Bronson had found in an old chest a little diary

of his mother's and this set him to journalizing. He made transcripts, too, from the dictionary to help him in spelling and defining. One wonders if the journals were in the boy's every day speech or in his literary language. Probably the latter, for although Alcott was to write as voluminously as any man in his generation, he never achieved with his pen the simple luminousness that made him the most distinguished conversationalist of his day.

When Alcott was about thirteen, various plans for his future were tried out. Since he was so fond of books, he was sent to stay with his maternal uncle, the Reverend Tillotson Bronson, Principal of the Cheshire Academy. Here, if he had applied himself, he might have gone to the Academy, and perhaps, ultimately have become a clergyman. But at the end of a month, Bronson was too homesick to stay longer, and that chance was gone.

The next spring Alcott went down the hill to Plymouth to work in Hoadley's clock works. He was clever at it, for he was like his father in being able to do things with his hands. But again, he was unhappy. The extreme regularity and routine depressed him and he was allowed to return home. He studied a few months with the local pastor, the Reverend Mr. Keys, and this completed his formal training, unless a short attendance at the district school when it was being taught by his Cousin William may be counted.

There remained two other possibilities besides farming, that is, peddling and teaching. Most of the neighbor boys who did not go to work in the factories tried peddling, and so did Bronson. Curiously enough, this was better. He could go at his own rate, and stop to talk with people as long as he pleased. It was good work, too, to be selling John Flavel's *A Treatise on Keeping the Heart*. This was a manual of practical advice on "preserving the soul in that holy frame to which it has been raised by grace." At first, Alcott was puzzled as to how to deliver the books, since he had no horse and

wagon. But his mother gave him her old green shawl, and he started on his travels with the books in a neat bundle. His first trip extended through northern and western Connecticut and over into Dutchess County, New York. On his way home Alcott visited the Newgate Prison at Granby, an abandoned mine which had been made into a prison in Revolutionary times and was still in use. The sensitive boy gazed unwillingly, yet with fascination, at this "Human Pandemonium," where he saw a man from his own town brought up from the mine and chained to a block to work as a blacksmith. This sight so affected his spirits that it was days before he recovered his usual cheerfulness. With the money from this peddling trip, Alcott bought prayer-books for his mother and for himself, and a supply of paper for his diary and correspondence.

Peddling, then, was better than the factory or the farm, and would do in a pinch, but there was still teaching. Uncle Tillotson was willing to recommend him, and the Wolcott School Committee granted him a license with no difficulty at all. But—they did not hire him to teach any of the schools in the district. The boy was tall, strong, and seventeen, old enough to deserve a suit made by the itinerant Hessian tailor the next time he came around. He wanted to see the world, the family income needed supplementing, and so it was determined that the eldest son might try his fortunes "at the South." He could peddle trinkets, clocks, and hardware, or, he might find a sale for that other New England staple—education. In the South he might find a school.

Accordingly, then, he took passage on the thirteenth of October, 1818, in the sloop "Three Sisters," bound from New Haven for Norfolk, Virginia. When they reached there, the other peddlers on board quickly went into the country to sell their wares, but Amos remained behind to "explore" the "wishes and views" of the people. He felt a slight chagrin at discovering that he was ill-equipped to serve even the

common people as schoolmaster. However, he was already charmed by the prodigality of the land and the gaiety of the people, which formed so vivid a contrast to the granite hills and pious frugality from which he had come, and so he was well enough pleased to stay and try peddling.

With high hopes, Alcott set out with handtrunks generously filled with trinkets for women and children. Peddlers were looked upon with just suspicion, but strangely enough, even the dogs held their bark for this one. Children recognized him as one of their kind, and mistresses were delighted with the quiet, smiling courtesy of the peddler who did them the honor of bringing Beauty to their doors. Daily he recorded in his Diary * his enthusiasm for Virginia and Virginians, his dislike for Northerners. Life as he had known it had been a steady toiling for the bare necessities of existence, with the gnawing appetite of Debt always to be fed. Here life was a game, to be played as courteously and charmingly as possible, and Debt could not exist in the midst of such plenty and joy. Alcott bloomed, acquiring unconsciously those "manners of a very great peer" which were always to grace his life. Did he acquire unconsciously, too, the idea that Debt was a phantom, to be banished with a bow and a smile? It is hard to account in any other way for the fact that the son of the thriftiest farmer on Spindle Hill lived most of his life in a serene disregard for the exigencies of Debt.

Luck was with Alcott, and he even made money, having eighty dollars to give to his father. A second trip with his brother Chatfield netted one hundred dollars, so that even the careful Cousin William was minded to try peddling. This time South Carolina was chosen as the scene of operations, and the boys again hoped for teaching. They arrived,

* These early journals no longer exist, having been burned in Philadelphia in 1833. Alcott's references to these journals give the impression that he regretted their loss, though he never said specifically whether or not the destruction was accidental.

however, in mid-term and no schools were to be had. Six hundred miles of swampland, no job, five weeks of nursing Bronson through typhoid were more than enough for William, who shortly returned home to begin a long, earnest career in the improvement of public health. Bronson, however, remained behind, gaily conferring the benefit of his presence upon his clientel; and, finally, upon returning home, wearing the handsomest of new suits, he carried to Spindle Hill the elegance, charm, and beauty, of the outer world. Why should not peddling work both ways, Connecticut wares to Virginia, Virginia virtues to Connecticut? It was a plan he was to carry out successfully, many years later, in his journeys from East to West, West to East. But just now, Wolcott was profoundly shocked at her local son:

"Are these our pedlers here before our eyes,
The handsome fellows, with such soft address?

"Black coat? and white cravat of daintiest tie?
Crimped ruffles, gleaming amethystine pin?
Vest of Marseilles o'er trowsers of drab dye,
Gold seals at watch-fob, jewelled watch within?"²

Alcott learned, however, more than fine manners in the South. The planters along the James opened their libraries to the scholarly peddler, and he was always glad when a Sunday or a rainy day gave him an excuse to remain there all day. He was delighted to find his old favorite *Pilgrim's Progress* in finer and more profusely illustrated editions than he had ever seen, or dreamed of to exist. Cowper's *Life and Letters* he read here, Lavater's *Physiognomy*, and John Locke's *An Essay On Human Understanding*.

Just as the trips to Virginia made indelible impressions on Alcott, and were reflected in attitudes and incidents of his later life, so did the later journeys to Carolina provide one of the turning points in Alcott's life. For here it was

² Bronson Alcott, *New Connecticut*, Boston, 1887, 89.

that he decided: "The moral sentiment now supersedes peddling, clearly and finally." What does this mean? In October, 1822, Alcott went to Chowan and Perquimans Counties in North Carolina, determined to improve his fortunes, for he now owed his father about six hundred dollars. Here, as in Virginia, he went about among the people, talked with them, and read their books. But these people were very different from the Virginia planters; they were Friends, or Quakers. Their books, too, were different. Here Alcott was given William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*, and William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Here he read Barclay's *Apology*, Madame Guion's *Poems*, and George Fox's *Journals*. Here, too, for a brief term, Alcott taught his first school.

Alcott had been freed from sectarian belief in the liberal atmosphere of Virginia, and here, by the quiet and pervasive influence of the Quakers, his mind was recalled to its early moral channels. The Quakers represented a phase of Puritanism more liberal than that with which Alcott had been associated. They had advanced notably in the direction of individualism, believing no longer that a civic community ought to consist of a united body of believers. They believed that every man might have a direct, spiritual relationship with his Maker, and that the "inner light" formed the only true basis of religious life. For each man, then, religious experience was personal, and direct.

From this time on, the "moral influence" was to dominate all Alcott's life. No Quaker, no theologian even, he nevertheless began to live in the light of his spiritual principles. Many were to be interested in the moral development of children, adopting their methods to the orthodox views of infant depravity set forth in the theology of Calvin. Only Alcott, denying these views, was to develop his educational methods and theories in the endeavor to cultivate the innate spirit of God in children. With this divine

mission, custom, creed, or society could not be permitted to interfere. And so, among the Quakers, the young peddler found another product to be brought back to Connecticut. And again, Connecticut would have none of it.

Farmer, teacher, peddler—at twenty-three Bronson Alcott had established the patterns that were to persist throughout his unique career. Wolcott and the world were mingled in his life. At one time Alcott was inclined to underestimate the influence of his early life, saying, "Wolcott air, scenery, seclusion, simple people, were negative forces, and so far harmless, if not helpful." But a mother from whom he inherited a philosophical and spiritual tendency, and a cheerful and placid temperament, was not a negative force. Alcott seldom mentioned the influence of his father, who died in 1829, but that silent, practical man contributed his share in the moulding of the character of his son. That courage and independence which led Joseph Alcox to sign off from his native faith and to become an Episcopalian reappeared in his son's fearless devotion to principle. The fact that the boy was reared as an Episcopalian, a dissenter, in a community that was prevailingly Congregational was not a negative force. Wolcott made him a member of a family; his travels, a citizen of the world. Alcott once said that peddling gave him more than a college. In what college would he have learned to know intimately both the slaves and the planters, the women and the children? In college he might have read John Locke, but in what college would he have found Fox's *Journals*? Men are the products of the vast web of forces whose dynamics comprise the interplay of physical inheritance and environment. From this web there emerged a man who was at once a practical, manually clever, hard-working Yankee, and a sensitive, original, philosophic thinker; a Puritan, and a Transcendentalist.

CHAPTER II

THE CONNECTICUT SCHOOLMASTER

"Education's All."

IN the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was common for youngsters to begin to teach "the home school" at sixteen or so. At first, it seems odd, not only that Bronson Alcott failed to get a school until he was in his twenties, but that he never did teach the school in his own district. Part of the explanation, however, may lie in the fact that his father was no politician. For local schools were often handed out, not to the most outstanding candidate, but to the sons and daughters and friends of influential members of the School Committee. Be that as it may, Bronson Alcott was twenty-four the winter he taught his first Connecticut School in the Fall Mountain district of Bristol, where he received ten dollars a month and board. He had previously taught a "Writing School" in April and May of 1822, at Warrentown, Virginia, and he opened a similar school in Wolcott in the fall of 1824. Here, for the sum of one dollar, he guaranteed a good hand in fourteen lessons of six hours each. The winter term of 1824-1825 found Alcott back in Bristol, this time at the West Street School, with his salary increased to fifteen dollars a month and board. In the following spring, Alcott went to the Centre School in Cheshire, where he taught four successive terms, a most unusual record for anybody. His salary here, a hundred and thirty-five dollars for four months, was very high. From Cheshire Alcott went back to Bristol, this time at the Centre School, where

he taught the winter term of 1827-1828 at a salary of twenty-three dollars a month. This completed Alcott's days of teaching in Connecticut.

Alcott taught in Connecticut just five years, and nothing unusual appears in the bare outline of facts. Why should his story be told? Do his voluminous manuscript Journals simply give a rare opportunity to discover all the details about an ordinary village school of the eighteen twenties? The story would be interesting if it were just that, but Alcott was no ordinary schoolmaster, and at least by the time he got to Cheshire, his schools were no ordinary schools. The long series of Alcott's Journals begins with the Cheshire Summer Term of 1826. Few details of Alcott's teaching before that time are available.

One significant fact about the teaching of these early years is that Cousin William Alcott was always near at hand. In Bristol, Bronson followed William as master of the West Street School, while William moved to the Centre District. Any beginning teacher was lucky to have William Alcott as guide and mentor, for he was known throughout the territory as a "smart" teacher. William was an indefatigable worker, often sleeping but four hours a night, and was in high favor with parents because he was a stern disciplinarian. It was his boast that at almost any moment during school hours a pin falling to the floor might be heard distinctly. This was somewhat remarkable in a day when perhaps two-thirds of the rural schools were technically known as "noisy" schools. Bronson Alcott, too, always insisted upon quiet in his schools.

The question of the influence that William Alcott, or anyone else, had upon Bronson's ideas and activity is a difficult one. William was older, a little more dominant; and at this period was an experienced teacher with an established reputation, whereas Bronson was serving his apprenticeship. It is only natural that William should have been

the pedagogic oracle. Yet it is significant that Bronson Alcott did not remain the satellite of his cousin. William later did his best work in the forwarding of hygiene, physical education, and practical conditions of school room construction, whereas Bronson followed his own bent into the realm of moral education. All who knew Bronson Alcott have testified to the original nature of his mind. It is always dangerous to speak of influence as though it were some sort of entity, handed from one person to another, and in this case the original, mystic tinge of Alcott's mind makes it doubly so. To speak of similarity and resemblances is nearer the truth.

By the time he reached Cheshire, Bronson Alcott had some little local reputation as a teacher. Although the advice and example of William must have been very helpful, indications are that Bronson was a "born" teacher. Looking back on this early teaching Alcott wrote in his Journal of October 29, 1873: "I must say, that I have not witnessed like magnetic power over the affections and the Will, swaying the whole intelligence, and conduct of pupils than it was given me to exert over mine: greater, perhaps, in some respects in these Connecticut schools, in Bristol and Cheshire, than even in my Temple School in Boston. Had my patrons known and appreciated my labors fully, it would not have happened probably, that these would have been transferred to the Conversation and the pen."

Alcott was wrong about this last, however. Whenever parents realized this schoolmaster's true aims, they made it impossible for him to continue. Always, when Alcott approached any sort of "success" by his ideal standards, the world interposed and made it necessary for him to transfer his labors. It becomes important, therefore, to see what variety of heresy this reputable schoolmaster had picked up.

"Education's All" was the motto of the "Cheshire Pestalozzian School." Innocent words, until one takes them seri-

ously. Education all? Hardly, work came first, and education could be attended to in the winter months when work was slack. And there was the Church. Any schoolteacher should remember that religion came first. Alcott drew up an imposing list of fifty-eight maxims * by which to regulate his conduct as an instructor. Since he hoped "to promote the collective happiness of man," by "imitating the Saviour" it is evident that Alcott was not unaware of religion and its aims. In his determination to do "nothing merely from subservience to custom," however, may be discovered germs of what might be called heresy, both in religion and in education.

This motto, "Education's All," gives a clue to two basic beliefs that underlie Alcott's teaching. One was that "*men are by nature, equal*"; and the other, that men—or at least children—are also basically good. These two ideas, having more than once shaken the world to bloody conflict, were again to demonstrate their potency in the smaller arena of the Connecticut village. For the young schoolmaster was beginning to think that if the disparities which this world exhibits were produced, not by the Almighty, but by the circumstances of this man-controlled world, then he, the schoolmaster, held the answer to the world's problems. If he could only discover the key that would unlock the resources of the mind, the secret that would enable the possessor to exert absolute sway over the plastic nature of the child, then he would be able to remake the world.

This idea of the equality of men was, of course, part of the intellectual climate of the early nineteenth century, but it dawned upon Alcott with pristine freshness. In this respect, his thinking was doubtless strongly influenced by his reading of Robert Owen's *New View of Society*, which discusses the influence of environment upon character and the possibilities for the regeneration of man. In fact, this entire

* For the entire list, see Appendix A.



WILLIAM A. ALCOTT

In Youth's glad morning, when the rising East
Glow's golden with assurance of success,
And life itself's a rare continual feast,
Enjoyed the more if meditated less,
'T is then that friendship's pleasures chiefly bless,
As if without beginning,—ne'er to end,—
So rich the season and so dear the friend,
When thou and I went wandering hand in hand,
Mine wert thou in our years of earliest prime,
Studious at home, or to the southern land
Adventuring bold, again in later time,
Thy kindly service, always at command
Of calm discretion, and abounding sense,
Prompted and showed the path to excellence

ALCOTT *Sonnets*

little volume of essays is dedicated to the demonstration of the fundamental proposition "that 'children collectively may be taught any sentiments and habits'; or, in other words, 'trained to acquire any character.'" In October, 1827, Alcott wrote an enthusiastic account of Robert Owen's system, predicting that his principles would ere long become general, that they would be the precursor of a happier day on the globe, and that the power of man could not prevent them from being universally embraced. Two years later, in December, 1829, Alcott penciled beside this passage, "Zeal without knowledge;" and again, in March, 1832, he commented, "Want of discrimination."

The psychology of John Locke, which Alcott had read in 1819 and was now re-reading, was also favorable to the view that the controller of outward circumstance could inculcate not only knowledge, but character upon the plastic natures of children.

It can be plainly seen that the man who was the chief agent in the forming of character held a great responsibility which he could not afford to shirk at the whim of unenlightened critics. It was not the minister, but the schoolmaster, who was responsible for the development of character. This attitude explains in part Alcott's arrogance, his refusal to make any compromise to please the community which was supporting him. He was not just the village schoolmaster; he was the apostle of enlightenment, engaged in a noble plan for the regeneration of man. But if Alcott was sometimes arrogant, he was also humble. His Journals are filled with prayers that he may be worthy of the high and noble task laid upon him, and the first of his maxims is that he is to teach "with a sense of the accountableness of the profession."

Although Alcott's reading may have influenced his ideas about the equality of mankind, his knowledge of child nature came from intimate daily association with children.

Theoretically, the doctrine of innate depravity is incompatible with that of democracy and equality, but Alcott needed no theologian or social democrat to tell him so. He knew children. To him, their innocence, their happy laughter were types of the good that might prevail everywhere were the evils of circumstance removed. One other man, Alcott knew, had so appreciated children, had known how to teach them. That was Jesus, the greatest teacher the world had ever known. Upon his example Alcott resolved to model his teaching.

Alcott recorded in his Journal: "Children are more inclined to good than many people imagine." When he ventured judgments upon the nature of children, however, he was getting perilously close to the precincts of the theologians. Did he say children were better than commonly thought? He was reminded that they were conceived in iniquity and born in sin. Did he believe that men were born equal? Yes, but his Calvinistic neighbors were equally certain that some were born to damnation and others to election. Did he believe that character was formed by the environment of this earth? Then they replied that it was formed by prayer, and setting by one's heart on God.

In his diary of August 28, 1826, Alcott attempted to disprove the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart. Briefly, his Rousseau-like argument was as follows: What is the *heart*, the *mind*, the *character*? Are they not that habitual temper which seems to actuate our conduct? Is this temper of mind something innate, or is it not formed and controlled by the power of Education? If the latter [his argument hangs on this], then the heart, the mind, the character is created, and cannot be said to exist antecedent to this creation. We cannot then speak of the depravity of a heart which cannot properly exist until it is formed by Education.

As it is, through mistaken notions of the character of the human mind, we pervert its tendencies, contaminate, poison

it, at the very onset. "Instead of following it in the path pointed out by its Maker, instead of learning by observation, and guiding it in that path; we unthinkingly attempt to shape its course according to our particular wishes. . . . By degrees its native simplicity and loveliness is perverted and over-awed; its tendencies are turned from their course; it drinks in the poison which we have then prepared for it; and becomes transformed from the pure spirit to which it once claimed title, to a man of the world: to a wretched grovelling miscreant, to a demon."

These are strong doctrines to be coming from the pen of a comparatively untutored man. They are doctrines that were to be modified by the experience and thought of later years, but the complete devotion to principle could never change. These beliefs, which carried with them the urgency of a divine mission, were certain to antagonize the majority of any conservative community. But who could hesitate? Not Bronson Alcott.

So it was that Alcott began teaching in Cheshire. He reminded himself that he was to teach with independence, "distinctive from all sinister, sectarian, or oppressive principles," and that he was to teach nothing, "merely from subservience to custom." Nevertheless, he made few changes during his first term. By the second one, however, having won the affection of his pupils, and the respect of his patrons, he judged that the time was ripe for reform. Gradually, innovations began. Alcott remembered vividly the tortures of sitting still for hours on a backless bench, his dusty, bare feet dangling in the air. Children's backs had been aching, their feet dangling, for a hundred years, and of inventive genius there'd been a plenty, too, but before new desks could be invented, a man had to discover that children were primarily active beings, and that children learned better when they were happy. So, then, Bronson Alcott and his Cousin William figured out a kind of school desk fitted to

children, the familiar type where the desk is fastened to the back of the seat before it. These new desks, made at Alcott's expense, were arranged in the classroom so that there would be plenty of room for games and exercise. Soon all the pupils were hopping gaily to the tap of a bell. At first the older girls were afraid to take part, but Alcott dispelled their doubts by reading them a letter in the *American Journal of Education*, telling of the success that Mr. Fowle of the Boston Monitorial School had had with physical exercises for young women.

Other things happened in the physical arrangements, too. Alcott thought that children learned better when they had "pleasing associations with the place of study," and so flowers and boughs from the woods were brought. Slates were introduced as blackboards, the first in any public school in Connecticut. But, Alcott knew, such physical changes could only aid, they could not produce the effects he wanted. What good would a beautiful schoolroom be, for instance, if the whole class were to be paralyzed by fear of the rod? Would there need to be physical punishment if children were learning only that which was useful, if they began with the simple and moved to the more difficult, if the teaching were varied and interesting? If working and playing together were fun, would not exclusion from the group be punishment enough? Experiment proved that it would, and so corporal punishment disappeared from Bronson Alcott's schools. Parents, though, were doubtful. "No lickin', no larnin'!"

Alcott soon found that if he were going to teach inductively, using concrete illustrations, beginning with the simple and progressing to the difficult, he would have to have new and uniform textbooks. Some of the children had one book, some another, and some none at all. It was common to have only one set of books for a whole family. In choosing new textbooks, Alcott relied on the recommendations

150. Low State of Republic of Government on Education.

Friday? Aug 16. 1827.

[illegible][illegible]

of the *American Journal of Education*. For the younger pupils he chose Fowle's *Child's Arithmetic*, Worcester's *Primer*, the *Franklin Primer* and Leavitt's *Easy Lessons*. Warren Colburn's *Intellectual Arithmetic*, the pioneer American textbook built on the inductive principle, was very satisfactory for the older pupils. New Woodbridge and Willard geographies supplanted Dwight and Morse, and even Noah Webster had to give way to Fowle's *Rational Guide to Orthography*.

When Alcott suggested these new textbooks, the cry of "Innovation—innovation" went up. He had previously complained of lack of interest on the part of parents, wishing for the "eye of publick approbation," and the "hand of publick liberality." He now had the eyes of the entire community upon him, though not with entire approbation. Some of the parents, however, bought the books gladly; others bought them, but grudgingly; and some refused. Though bitterly disappointed, Alcott persisted in his course, but commented in his *Journal*, May 11, 1827, with unaccustomed bitterness, upon the fact that parents paid no attention to attempts at regeneration and reform, until they began to cost money:

Wretched indeed is the publick sentiment in reference to Education in this village. . . . The publick sentiment needs enlightening; the prejudices of men dissipated; intelligence diffused; precedent rendered ridiculous; and what is worse than all to effect, avarice liberalized. This is a work which requires the talent and temper of a true Reformer to accomplish. I am not that one. . . .

At his own expense Alcott bought a library of some two hundred volumes for the use of the school.* Alcott, the scholars, and the parents read the books eagerly, but this did not mollify the parents who objected to expense. Indeed, it only served to deepen their suspicion of the schoolmaster,

* See Appendix B.

for if one "had a book," why should he buy two hundred more? And why should a man *give* the books to the school?

In the midst of the controversy about the books came the news that there was being founded in Brooklyn, Connecticut, a society for the improvement of common schools. It was wonderful to learn that others were interested in the same things he was, and with great suppressed excitement Alcott prepared an account of his school for his cousin William to present to the society. It was favorably received, and shortly afterward, Alcott's school was publicized in Connecticut and Massachusetts newspapers as "the best common school in the state, perhaps in the United States." In his *Journal*, May 14, 1827, Alcott commented:

This certainly is a very high commendation: we do not deserve it. Or even if we did, the much beyond our work would still induce us to consider this commendation but a negative merit. Schools in general are of little value; and whatever merit ours may have, we feel ourselves very much deficient. We hope there are many very much superiour. And although we would not conceal the fact that we are much flattered by this commendation, still our school demands very much yet to be done.

A detailed account of such an outstanding school would of course be of interest to the readers of the *American Journal of Education*, and so the issues for June and July, 1828, carry Alcott's own story of his work, both as to theory and practice.

Teachers visiting this outstanding school—and there came to be many of them—would probably have noticed first the new furniture and its unusual arrangement. They would probably have sniffed at the decorations, but some of them might have noticed that the children seemed to be having a mighty good time. Chiefly, though, they would want to see how this schoolmaster taught the common branches. After all, that was what pupils went to school to learn; that was what they themselves were paid to teach.

Reading first, of course. There was no primer class, trying painfully to identify A, or maybe even S. Instead, the little ones were grouped around the schoolmaster, who had a picture in his hand. They looked at the pictures of the animals, and down at the words—*dog*, *cat*, *cow*, until soon they knew which words went with which animal. Some days they worked on sounds, and that was fun, for then they could buzz like bees and hiss most fiercesomely. After the children had learned to distinguish sounds, and had acquired a vocabulary of words, associated with the objects they represent, then they might begin *defining*. Alcott wanted to make sure that the children understood that words had no reality in themselves, but had a definite meaning, and that whenever a word was read, the idea was to go with it. This task involved infinite patience on the part of the teacher, but Alcott found it necessary to stress it, since older methods of reading had led children to call out the words, quickly and correctly, but with utter disregard for what they meant.

After a child had learned to read in this fashion, then he might begin the analysis of words into letters, or *spelling*. Alcott had no use for spelling lists. His spelling words were found in the reading, or geography lessons, in anything the child read. Thus the children soon discovered, according to Alcott, that spelling is but "deliberate reading."

For teaching arithmetic, the older men who visited Alcott probably had one copybook full of problems and another with the answers. The former they transmitted to their charges, the latter they kept safe in the private drawer. Others had Daboll's arithmetics from which they would dictate the definitions to be memorized. It was a bit shocking, therefore, to find this man Alcott teaching arithmetic by means of beans. Beans and blocks of wood. The children held them in their hands, they counted them, arranged them in patterns. All had slates, and were allowed to mark on them as they pleased. They drew the cubes, learned to make

numbers, and finally, they were writing. Writing was never a separate subject in this school. As the child learned to write words, their qualities were pointed out, sentences were analyzed, and, without knowing it, the child was learning the rudiments of functional grammar.

Ordinarily, the first step in the study of grammar was for the pupil to memorize the parts of speech, with their definitions, and then the variations to which those parts of speech were subjected by number, gender, case, mode, and tense. Or, in short, one memorized as many pages of Lindley Murray as possible. Alcott, though, wished to make children understand what they were doing—"to make them think, to reason, to invent"; and so rote-learning, long the stand-by of common schools, was taboo in this one. Children were urged to think about words, and their qualities. And so a lesson which started as an analysis of Scripture might turn out to be a study of grammar, or the opposite.

The visiting schoolmasters, many of whom were doubtless glib on the subject of ellipsics, meridians, parallels, zones, tropics, and colures, were probably amazed at the simplicity of Alcott's teaching of geography. For he began with the schoolyard, drawing a map of it, and then extended it to include streets and houses the pupils knew. Later, he took them into the woods for study.

So much for the common branches. But there were other subjects and means of learning in this school. Alcott himself had found the practice of keeping a journal so helpful, that this exercise came to be quite important in several respects. Of course, in the first place, it afforded excellent training in composition. One learns to write by writing, not by studying rules of grammar, nor by copying passages from textbooks. Free expression of original thought was rarely encouraged in the schools of that time. His own Journal had helped Alcott to formulate his thoughts and to express them in fluent, if not always simple, prose. Another

adaptation Alcott made of the journals was to have the pupils of the highest class keep there a record of the number of ideas attained in each branch of study to which their attention had been directed during the day. The sums were dated and added together, which "pleasant and useful exercise in Arithmetick" Alcott called "Testing their Journal." By this means, each pupil knew the amount and kind of ideas he had obtained, and could compare his "intellectual progress, or declension" with that of former weeks, or of his fellow-students. The exercise might, with equal propriety, have been called "Testing the Instructor." For example, from "Bible History," the pupils gained 613 ideas; from "English Grammar," 349; from "Geography," 14; and from "Mental Arithmetic," none. Although arithmetic was the specialty of most country schoolmasters, Alcott never showed any interest in it, and one suspects that the fine points of this study were among the occult sciences so far as he was concerned.

Alcott also used "journalizing" as an aid to moral government. In the Cheshire school the pupils were encouraged to analyze not only their own moral tendencies, but to record the delinquencies of their fellow-students and of the instructor. Saturday mornings were devoted to a discussion of the moral issues thus raised, rather than to a study of the Catechism. Alcott recognized the danger of such a practice, but felt that as it worked out, the system was a definite aid to self-government.

One of the most important schoolroom exercises, here as later, was for the teacher to explain the scripture lesson in language familiar to his hearers. In this way Alcott attempted to relate to their private lives many biblical moral lessons which were but vaguely understood in the literal words. He also told little moral lessons illustrative of some vice or virtue, and moralized the amusements of the children in his attempt to make moral education effective. His suc-

cess is shown in the number of ideas the children attributed to "Bible History." "The religion of children, if not of men," he said, "consists in the practice of morality—at any rate the latter is the stepping stone to the former."

Here, again, Alcott ran counter to public opinion. The doctrine that the religion of children consists in the practice of morality would *a priori* be labeled subversive, because it was new. Upon mature consideration, however, the doctrine would become even less acceptable. The religion of children was well known to consist of family prayers in the morning, sitting quietly in church, and doing credit to the family whenever the minister unexpectedly chose to ask a question from the Catechism. The school was expected to train the child to behave in this fashion. Public opinion by no means agreed with Alcott when he declared that the aim of education involved, as its leading and primary principle, "the *production, and original exercise of thought.*"

It is not surprising that parents who took for granted that "book-larnin'" was the aim of education should have failed to understand a schoolmaster who wanted chiefly to make his scholars "*feel morally well—and to do well—and think well.*" He published his belief that education should be *spontaneous, social, and rational*. He hoped that all that was simple, beautiful, and individual in a child might be allowed to grow in a harmonious fashion. Alcott knew that friendly relations with his pupils would throw a living interest around the studies as well as aid in moral government. And humbly, he walked the path of learning with his pupils: "As friendly companions, on whom the goodness of God has conferred the high privilege, instructors should accompany their pupils in the pursuit of truth; clothed with no other authority, assuming no other superiority than previous experience has given them."

At the same time that this Cheshire school of Alcott's was being publicly praised, strong dissatisfaction was break-

ing out in Cheshire. Some parents objected to the added expense, and others distrusted the influence of a teacher who never licked a pupil and who invited them to spend pleasant evenings at his rooms. The dissenting group petitioned for their share of the school money, received it, and opened a rival school. Alcott bore the criticism with the same outward patience he was to display on similar occasions throughout his life. Although he had many warm friends and supporters, the morale of the school was broken, scholars coming and going as they pleased, and so Alcott closed it early in June, 1827.

The next fall Alcott went to Bristol, even then somewhat of a bustling mill town. There, being quite sure of his theories, he wasted little time in experimentation, and in consequence, managed to compress the Cheshire experience of two years into five months at Bristol (November, 1827, to March 28, 1828). His scholars Alcott found to have considerable mechanical knowledge but little original thought. To the end of remedying this deficiency, Alcott bent his efforts, and Bristol reacted promptly and effectively. Active opposition manifested itself by January 14, and on February 4, a rival school began with fifteen pupils. In Cheshire, Alcott had complained of lack of attention, but here he recorded in February that his school had been visited almost every day for the last two weeks. His moral opinions were subject to discussion, and one clergyman alluded to them from the pulpit. During this time Alcott went quietly about his work, visiting neighboring schools, gathering together his beliefs in a series of "Inductions," and envisioning the spread of his system throughout the state. He was wrong about that, however, for Boston and Philadelphia were to prove more receptive to his "views." After the close of his Bristol school Alcott was never again to teach in his native state.

Was Alcott a genuinely creative thinker and teacher, or

was he merely an avid reader with the ability to assimilate and use what he read? His first school journal bears on the title page the inscription "the Cheshire Pestalozzian School," so that it would be easy to assume, as some have done, that Alcott was simply a loyal and enthusiastic disciple of Pestalozzi, notable only for his work in spreading the gospel of the master. Acquaintance with the workings of Alcott's mind, however, does not support that hypothesis. Alcott has been professionally known, if he can be said to be known, as the American Pestalozzi, and it has been said that he was "a Pestalozzian without knowing the basis of his pedagogic creed." The manuscript journals belie this statement, showing the growth of his ideas in the daily expressions of thought. Alcott's reading is also carefully recorded in the journals so that it is possible to determine with some accuracy what the basis of Alcott's creed was.

It is natural to compare Alcott and Pestalozzi, for there are many resemblances between their theories and practice, as well as some rather important differences in emphasis, at least. Both used an inductive approach, and both insisted that studies should be subject to the natural order of development of the child's powers. Likewise, the two, emphasizing the educative influence of the home, and especially the mother, insisted that the school should be as home-like as possible. Both men approached their tasks in the spirit of an experimental search for the best methods, and both attempted to universalize their theories into instruments for the regeneration of man. Both deprecated the use of corporal punishment, and they agreed, too, that books should have a supplemental, rather than a primary, place in the educative scheme.

In spite of the general harmony of theory, the differing emphases of the two men led to wide divergences. One of Pestalozzi's great contributions lay in the bringing of education to the children of the poor. He therefore stressed

vocational education (which Alcott never mentioned), and he endeavored to mechanize education, so that even an unlearned person could teach children. None of this mechanical element appeared in Alcott's work; his was personal to the extreme. Pestalozzi was enthusiastic about the disciplinary value of arithmetic, whereas allegory occupied Alcott. Though Pestalozzi was inspired by the highest morality and deepest religious convictions, nevertheless these were not developed into a psychology, a religion, and a philosophy to the extent that they were in the work of Bronson Alcott.

Alcott was no mere imitator of Pestalozzi. His thinking and his teaching bear the stamp of an original and independent mind. Yet it is clear that Alcott had a good knowledge of Pestalozzi's work, and that if Pestalozzi's ideas were not the source of Alcott's, at least the latter's work was reinforced by a knowledge of Pestalozzi, and that his teaching was done "in the spirit of Pestalozzi's method."

Accordingly, one would expect to find some of Pestalozzi's works in the group of books Alcott listed as a "Library for the Instructor's Use in conducting daily studies." As there are none, any knowledge Alcott had of Pestalozzi must have come from a secondary source. The key books on this list are the *American Journal of Education*, Edgeworth's *Practical Education*, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Cogan's *Philosophical Treatise of the Passions*, Owen's *New View of Society*, *Epitome of Pestalozzian Instruction*, *Hints to Parents*, and *Scriptures*.

At first glance, the work entitled *An Epitome of Pestalozzian Instruction* would appear to be a likely possibility. However, this short pamphlet, written by William Maclure, a Scotch disciple of Pestalozzi, is a bombastic account of general principles, and presents no details of method or practice.

The next obvious source is the *American Journal of Education*, for it did much to spread a knowledge of foreign educational ideas. Contrary to one's expectation, however,

the first volume, which appeared in 1826, the year Alcott began to teach at Cheshire, contains no article referring directly to Pestalozzi, and his name is not found in the index. Volume II (1827), contains only a brief notice of Pestalozzi's death. The magazine does, nevertheless, contain two articles written in the Pestalozzian spirit which are guides to further knowledge. One is entitled "Suggestions to Parents," and consists of extracts from J. M. Keagy's *Christian Monitor*. The other article, a review of *Hints to Parents*, suggests a closer examination of the book itself, which is on Alcott's selected reading list.

Hints to Parents is little more than an anonymous pamphlet of two parts, yet in it are to be found clearly expressed most of Pestalozzi's ideas, and specific illustrations of the method. The only clue to the authorship is found in the first London edition, 1823, which bears these words, "By a Foreigner, three years resident at Yverdun." It is quite evident upon reading the book that it was written by someone who really knew the system, since it is in decided contrast to the more wooden accounts by Americans. There is both external and internal evidence to show that Alcott knew and used this book. In the first place, Alcott's Journal enables us to identify as his a later review of the book in the *American Journal of Education*. *Hints to Parents* contains a number of direct quotations at the bottom of the pages, chiefly from Pestalozzi. The first sentence of one of them is found correctly copied in the manuscript of Alcott's account of the Cheshire School:

The only solid and true foundation of all morality is found in the first relations of Mother and Child.

In a printed account written by Alcott, however, it reappears in a new wording to illustrate Moral Education:

The only solid and true foundation of all morality is laid in the first relations of Instructor and Pupil.—Pestalozzi.

Since Alcott did not have access to Pestalozzi in the original, it is most probable that *Hints to Parents* is the source of the reworded quotation. It is not so easy to draw a direct line of connection between a book like *Hints to Parents* which is addressed chiefly to mothers, and a great desire to do something to aid mothers in their proper task of educating their little ones, though the connection is entirely within the realm of possibility. Similarly, Alcott often used the words, "in the spirit of Pestalozzi's method," and that note recurs throughout *Hints to Parents*. Though small, the book is surprisingly comprehensible, and vivid, and would appear to be the chief source of Alcott's knowledge of Pestalozzian principles.

On Alcott's reading list, there are other suggestions of influences equal in importance to that of Pestalozzi. *The American Journal of Education*, though barren in one respect, is nevertheless fruitful in others. On the reverse of the index at the front of Volume I of the Journal is this note: "To '*The Journal of Education*' are we indebted for the first correct direction of our thoughts on the great subject of Education." William Alcott strengthens the testimony: "I have often heard this teacher affirm that he owes his success, in a great measure, to the 'Journal' of which I have already spoken;—that without this, his experiments would neither have been prosecuted nor sustained." Though the statement was doubtless true in the main, it was too strong to suit its subject, who pasted it in his diary, but placed a penciled question mark beside the latter part. Nevertheless, the magazine was carefully read and studied, the important articles being listed in his journal. The new books for the Cheshire School were chosen from those favorably reviewed in its columns. In addition, the *Journal of Education* gave Alcott a sense of support, of being enlisted with others in a common cause.

The magazine comes close to Alcott's practice in two

important respects: it has a strong moral bias and it contains numerous accounts of mutual and monitorial schools, both American and foreign. Alcott admired the *Lancastrian* or *monitorial* plan of instruction, but thought it too mechanical to be blindly followed; and was "better pleased with the *Pestalozzian* or *Philosophical* method." He described his own school: "the mode of conveying instruction being in the spirit of the *Monitorial* and *Pestalozzian* plans united; or what is the same thing expressed in other terms, *Mutual and Inductive*." The *Manual of Mutual Instruction*, written by William Russell, editor of the *American Journal of Education*, is on Alcott's list of books for professional use.

Probably no book read at this time was more influential than Robert Owen's *New View of Society*. Further possibilities of "moral" influence are found in Adam Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, and in Dr. Cogan's *Treatise on the Philosophy of the Passions*. Dr. Cogan, who was "perused with much pleasure," was an advocate of "affectionate influence" in government. Alcott recorded that these two books seemed to him not only valuable but necessary to an instructor, adding that they had "opened a new turn of thought." On the score of practice, Alcott may have owed a very real debt to the Edgeworths, for the diary also mentions their influence, as well as that of Mrs. Barbauld, the Aikens, and Thomas Day. All these works were read continually, either over and over, or in snatches, for they reappear time and again on various lists.

The book listed simply as *Scriptures* was the one read most often, the book which influenced Alcott most deeply, not only as a Connecticut schoolmaster, but all his life. This book he read and lived. Alcott had been accustomed from his youth to think in terms of parables and allegories, and he often dropped into Biblical language when aroused. His description of "popular treatment of reformers" (Sep-

tember 22, 1826) illustrates his tendency to use scriptural analogies as well as his stubborn devotion to principle. He pointed out how in modern times, as in old, any innovator was received as dangerous or ignorant, and even former friends grew distant and cold. "How knoweth this man more than others? How knoweth he letters, having never learned? . . . Hath he ever been the inmate of a University? . . . Hath he ever taught in our privileged seminaries or churches? Where then hath he these things?"

"The answer is ready," wrote Alcott. "He has studied the Scriptures, he has separated their spirit from the shackles of form, of mode, and ceremony by which they have been so long restrained. He has studied Man, Human Nature. He has traced *effects* to their *causes*, and assigned those causes to their first Great Cause. He has studied man as he is from the hand of his Creator, and not as he is made by the errors of the world. He has drank at the Fountain, and not at the distant streams. He has listened to the instructions of *Him who spake as never man spake*—who saw as man never before saw—who did as man never before did. And, making due allowances for the imperfections of human nature, *he is going to do likewise.*"³

Here is the man, in all his glory and all his imperfections. He is twenty-seven; he is a village schoolmaster. On the Wolcott hills, in the swamps of Virginia, among the Friends of Carolina, in the pages of John Bunyan, he has learned to penetrate to the spiritual core behind the rind of outer reality. He knows intimately all sorts of people, and he is able to estimate their reaction to ideas such as his. But he has accepted the divine principle as the only reality, and success or failure, praise or ridicule, prosperity or poverty are all one to the man who, humbly and proudly, has chosen a child for his guide to the kingdom of heaven.

³ Odell Shepard, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, 1938, 5.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

"It is no unsubstantial good to dwell
In Childhood's heart
On Childhood's guileless tongue;
To be the chosen favorite oracle,
Consulted by the innocent and young,
To be remembered as the light that flung
Its first fresh lustre on the unwrinkled brow."

Alcott Journals, August 8, 1826.

As BRONSON ALCOTT left the villages of Connecticut where his efforts at regeneration had not been appreciated, he turned instinctively toward Boston, the city of light. And he was right. In a century of reform Boston was a center of philanthropic and intellectual movements. One of the "wee lambs" in the "flock of benevolent and ostentatious plans" that were going forward in Boston in 1827 was the project of establishing an infant school. Since 1818, when Robert Owen had established the first one in England, these schools had attracted much attention as a way of ameliorating the condition of the poor. Hence, liberal-minded people in Hartford, New York, and Philadelphia, as well as in Boston, were beginning to found such schools. New York, even then beginning to outstrip its Massachusetts rival, founded the first such school in America, May 23, 1827, with no less a person than his excellency, DeWitt Clinton, Governor of the State, as Patron. On April 8, 1828, the ladies of Boston, outdone only in dispatch, banded themselves into an "Infant School Society" and subscribed liberally to its support.

One of the persons most interested in the projected infant school was Miss Abba May, daughter of Colonel Joseph May. There was more than one reason for her interest. She was by nature earnest, good, dynamic, and so, eager to take part in a movement for the improvement of mankind. Furthermore, she knew just the man to direct such a school. When she had last visited her brother, the Reverend Samuel J. May, in Brooklyn, Connecticut, there was also another guest. It was the tall, fair-haired young teacher whose school had just been praised as the best in the state, if not in the United States. Both Samuel May and his sister recognized at once that this was no ordinary young man, and both took him to their hearts. To Mr. May he seemed "a born sage and saint"; but his handsome appearance, his gentle and winning manners must have made a more human appeal to the young lady. The conversations "of a very interesting nature," as Alcott would say, begun in Brooklyn, were continued by letter. Consequently, when the Infant School Society was organized, Abba May wrote posthaste to her friend, desiring "some brief plans that will be attended with little expense and great benefit." She dropped the hint that she wished her friend were there to help with the enterprise, and this was all the inducement Alcott needed, for in less than two weeks he was there.

Alcott seems to have known exactly what to do. Boston was then little more than a country town, and wide acquaintance was inevitable. But even so, the account of Alcott's first week in Boston is little short of remarkable. He called upon the ladies of the Infant School Society; heard Channing, Gannett, Ware, and Palfrey preach; attended a lecture on Peace by the celebrated William Ladd; dined with William Russell, editor of the *American Journal of Education*; attended a meeting of the teachers of the Franklin Sabbath School; and was invited to take charge of the infant school for three months. Such was the social ferment that it was

easy for the "improvers of education" to know each other. Among the people Alcott called on at once were Charles Follen, liberal German refugee, who was the first professor of German literature at Harvard, and Eliza Lee Cabot, author, who was to become Follen's wife. Since Alcott had cured himself of illness by cold water bathing, he promptly made the acquaintance of Dr. John Gorham Coffin, author of "Cold and Warm Bathing." As one schoolmaster to another, he made himself known to Benjamin Apthorp Gould, Master of the Boston Latin School. And he went to church, twice on Sunday, and sometimes through the week. One wonders at Alcott's capacity for sermons, but these were not of the variety to be found in Wolcott, or Cheshire, either. It was Minds that Alcott was seeking, and in the Boston clergy he found the outstanding men of the country. The Unitarian revolt had been successfully completed by the time Alcott came to Boston, so that these men stood for a social doctrine somewhat like that Alcott had reached in his independent thinking.

When the first flush of enthusiasm had worn off, however, Alcott reluctantly realized that these "inspirers" were much less intelligent than he had supposed on the subject of the education of children. With characteristic singleness of purpose, Alcott devoted himself to discovering all there was to know about the theory and practice of infant schools. He read all the books he could find about the English and American schools and went on a visit to see the schools in New York and Philadelphia. Both of these schools were modeled very closely on their English prototypes. These had been founded by Robert Owen after a visit to Pestalozzi and Oberlin in 1818. The movement was furthered by other humanitarians under the leadership of the Marquis of Lansdowne and Henry Brougham, and the subscription list included James Mill, Mr. Wilberforce, T. R. Malthus, Mrs. Nightingale, and J. M. Raikes, founder of the Sunday School.

As Alcott studied the books on infant education written by Samuel Wilderspin and William Wilson, he could see the Pestalozzian base in the moral training, in the affectionate discipline, and in the teaching by means of tangible objects. The wealthy philanthropic founders, however, were always eager to combine doing good with economy, and so they eagerly embraced the monitorial method which made it possible to have in one school from one hundred to three hundred children between the ages of eighteen months and five years.

In these schools the boys and girls were separated and were put in little groups of five or ten, each in charge of a monitor. These monitors had been trained beforehand, and, at the stroke of a bell, they would lead their groups to a "lesson post." This was an upright piece of wood holding the lesson to be learned, sometimes to the rhythmic beating of hands or feet. When fifteen minutes were up, the bell rang again, and the monitor led his little flock to another "fold," as it was called, and the mechanical process began once more.

Although these schools purported to be something new, as they developed in England, they were little more than small copies of schools for older children. Disguised as play, the acquisition of facts was of primary importance. For example, on the playground, each class would go to its own tree, clasp hands and circle around, reciting the multiplication table, the pence table, or the alphabet as they went. In the manuals Alcott found chapters on "The Art of Reading," "The Art of Writing," "The Art of Arithmetic," and in the notes were lists of "Remarkable Persons," and "Remarkable Places in Scripture" for handy memorization. The English schools were founded chiefly for the poor and doubtless did much for the physical health of their charges, but in the accounts of their work Alcott found none of the spontaneous methods of teaching, none of the free development of powers he was seeking.

He was similarly disappointed in the American schools he visited. He had already read the manual published by Mrs. Bethune, the Directress of the New York school. It was entitled "*Infant Education, or Remarks on the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor, from the age of eighteen months to seven years; with an account of some of the infant schools in England, and the system of education these adopted. . . . By a Friend to the Poor.*" Alcott failed to describe his visit to this school, simply labeling it, in his disgust, as "too mechanical and sectarian." From an account published by William Ladd, in the *American Journal of Education* for November, 1828, one can gain some idea of what Alcott saw when he visited this school.

My visit was on a day of public exhibition, and if ever my heart beat as though it would burst from its narrow tenement—if ever I had difficulty in preventing my tears from overflowing my eyes, it was then. To see these infants raked from lanes and alleys, cleanly though coarsely clad, seated in an amphitheatre, on benches raised one above another, with joyful and intelligent countenances, watching every motion of their teacher, none over six years of age, from that age down to eighteen months, reading, spelling, answering questions in arithmetic, geography, and astronomy; repeating a chapter in the Bible, and giving the sense in a plain, perspicuous, and intelligent manner, which would put to shame many of our grown persons, even professors of religion, and singing hymns with astonishing harmony and melody, I could but exclaim, surely 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.' ⁴

Even this rhetorical extravagance of William Ladd indicates somewhat why Alcott was displeased. The questions on scripture, he felt, cultivated the memory rather than the understanding, and even the sentiments of the hymns were too orthodox for him. He was, of course, pleased with the exercises in analysis, "though the aim at effect was too apparent." Even though he did repudiate the "mechanical, parrot-like

⁴ *American Journal of Education*, III (November, 1827), 691.

part of the exercises," which, he contended, trammelled the mind and only served "the purpose of ostentation, and authority," Alcott made in this school many practical observations which would aid him as he began his own work.

Alcott was similarly disappointed in Philadelphia. Mr. Bacon's school there, he felt, was but "an engine of orthodoxy, by which the children of the poor may be trained up for the Presbyterian Church, by imbibing the doctrines of Calvin." Yet here, as in New York, the results were not wholly negative, for Alcott met a number of interesting and influential people. Among these was the Reverend M. M. Carll, a Swedenborgian pastor whom Alcott thought to be more intelligent on the subject of infant education than anyone he had met. And through Dorothea Lynde Dix, Alcott met Matthew Carey, Philadelphia bookseller, and author, who gave him some pamphlets. Among these was "an ideal and beautiful affair," which turned out to be J. P. Greaves' *Exposition of the Principles of Conducting Infant Education*, a most important discovery, which he would remember many years later.

Alcott's enthusiasm for infant schools in general had not abated, even though he was disappointed in the particular ones he had visited in New York and Philadelphia. These schools, he felt, could have been of eminent value to society if they had been conducted according to the Christian spirit. Upon Alcott's return to Boston, arrangements were completed for the opening of his school. Miss May had applied for the assistantship, but the Board of Managers elected a Mrs. Brush. Alcott consoled himself with the thought that Miss May would thus be free to assist him in his own private elementary school which he was even then projecting. The infant school was opened in a large, airy room on Salem Street, June 23, 1828, with seventeen pupils.

As might be expected, Alcott abandoned entirely the mechanical methods of the monitorial system and substituted

a plan based upon the needs of children as they develop in a natural and spontaneous manner. So simple a plan as his led people to believe that it possessed no power. "Immediate, obvious, large results" were anticipated, particularly by those who had contributed money, and they were likely to think that where there was no formal exhibition, no complex system of operation, no ostentatious display, there could be no advancement, no valuable results. The ladies supporting the Salem Street Infant School, supposing the purpose of the school to be the communication of knowledge, would have liked to have the children reciting hymns, prayers, and pages of Scripture. But although he found a "rather general misapprehension" of what he considered the true aim of infant culture, Alcott was very clear as to the results he hoped to achieve through his infant school: "*Its purpose is to form mind, heart, character: to make its subjects wise, and happy, and to make them so by a simple, natural, and rational process.*"

"In the constitution of a child's nature," he wrote, "shall we find the principles of infant cultivation." What, then, were these principles? With unaccustomed specificity, Alcott has stated in his *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction* the tenets of his belief: "*infant education when adapted to the human being, is founded on the great principle, that every infant is already in possession of the faculties and apparatus required for his instruction, and, that, by a law of his constitution, he uses these to a great extent himself; that the office of instruction is chiefly to facilitate this process, and to accompany the child in his progress, rather than to drive or even to lead him.*"⁵

Alcott had always considered himself a follower of John Locke, but he was not thinking of Locke when he wrote that

⁵ Bronson Alcott, *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction*, Boston, 1830, 26 f.

the great principle of education was that a child would find his drives to action within himself. But there lies one of Bronson Alcott's chief claims to fame. He had read many books, and had eagerly embraced certain truths he found there. Many men, however, had read more books than he had, and were better able to understand and criticize them. Alcott, though, could do more. Like two or three others in the memorable time of man, he had the simple genius to look at children and see them as themselves, quite divorced from current or historical theories of education, religion, politics, or social standing. It was most upsetting to everyone except Alcott and the children. They had a very good time together.

Alcott had not forgotten what he had learned at Cheshire about play. He felt that the claims of the physical nature were paramount, and so free and natural physical activity came first. It was toward gaining the affection and confidence of his charges that Alcott first turned, and in this respect he appealed to the diviner nature of the child—the conscience. Through this means, Alcott felt, the child might find within himself sources of self-dependence and self-control. Motives to action always received unrelaxed attention in Alcott's schools; they are the permanent foundations of character.

Alcott tried to make the school as much like the desirable circumstances of everyday life as possible. There were no formal precepts, but rather a living together as happily as possible. As always, Alcott felt that pleasant associations were of primary importance. He thought of the intellectual faculties of the child in terms of association, attention, taste, memory, judgment, reflection, reason, and imagination. In all his schools for young children Alcott paid particular attention to the development of the imagination, partly because he felt it was neglected elsewhere, and partly because

he considered the child to be dependent upon it before reason and judgment develop. For this reason he used stories, pictures, and imaginative poetry.

For the cultivation of the other "intellectual faculties" there were simple exercises in adding and subtracting by means of fingers, cubes and other tangible objects. The children looked at books, spelled a little and marked on slates, for Alcott felt it good that their hands should be busy. Singing and instrumental music he valued as a means of cultivating the ear and voice, and he liked marching and dancing to music.

There was nothing very remarkable in these exercises themselves, nor was kind affection unusual for an infant school. But a school in which the child found his impulses to duty, or to progress within himself was new. There were few laws, few punishments, and rewards. At the same time that he was encouraged to obey the law of his own nature, the child was made to realize also that he was a social being, that he formed a part of the "common conscience" of the group. "Sympathy and imitation, the moral action of the teacher upon the children, of the children on him, and each other" formed the common government of the school.

Alcott himself was delighted with the way the children responded to his training. Their worst habits were gone, new ones were being acquired; they were growing "*wiser—better—happier.*" Others, too, visited the school, understood its aims, and were convinced by its excellence. "You may think me extravagant in my impressions when I say that I left the school room with a clearer conception than I ever had before of the innate excellence of the human soul, and with a deeper reverence for it, as the production of Infinite wisdom and love," wrote William Russell in the *Christian Teachers Manual* after a visit to Alcott's school. Samuel J. May, too, found his estimate of infant schools raised after visiting Alcott's, though he suspected it was not a typical

one. He saw that the teacher's design seemed to be "to invite rather than to compel attention; to awaken thought rather than to load the memory; and in one word to develop the whole mind and heart, rather than a few of the properties of either."

Alcott was much pleased by these public comments, since they appeared at a time when he was combatting notions of a more "unnatural and exclusive system of instruction." In this he was more than usually successful, for the ladies of the Infant School Society wished him to continue when his three months' term was up. He was tempted to do so, for he enjoyed the work, and had not wholly convinced the ladies of the Infant Society of the worth as yet, of the simpler and more natural methods of education. The pay, however, was so small that he decided to open his own private elementary school for boys on the same principles. In this he was doubtless encouraged by William Russell, who was much interested in the relation of infant school practice to elementary schools. Russell was also anxious to observe the effect of infant schools upon the children of people in good circumstance, as well as upon those of the very poor. Accordingly, then, Alcott left the infant school on October 17, 1828, and opened his own school on Common Street on October 20.

During this period Alcott had stirred in many movements, and had greatly enlarged the promising acquaintance-ship of the first week. He was living at Mrs. Newall's boarding house, where his roommate was Josiah Holbrook, even then busy at founding the American Lyceum. The Sunday School movement, then in its infancy, fascinated Alcott, partly because there seemed to him to exist in that quarter "a very prominent ignorance" regarding the true manner and nature of instruction. A new branch even of an established institution is always a fertile field for fresh ideas, and Alcott entered eagerly into the movement. He was par-

ticularly interested in training the teachers of the Sunday School classes.

Of all the friendships Alcott made in this early Boston period, none was more important than that with Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, who was then helping William Russell in a school for young ladies. Alcott felt at once elements of genius in the woman who was to become "the grandmother of the American kindergarten," but he did not quite approve of her, at first. It was his first experience with a scholarly and intellectual woman and her manners struck him as "artificial." But he could not quite let it go at that. In his *Journal* that evening (August 9, 1828), he wrote, "She may aim perhaps at being 'original' and fail in her attempt, by becoming offensively assertive. On the whole there is, we think, too much of the *man*, and too little of the *woman*, in her familiarity and freedom, her affected indifference of manner. Yet after all she is interesting." His enthusiasm grew, however, after he read Miss Peabody's article on "Early Education" in the December *Journal of Education*. Here was a woman who understood education. The article phrased his views so excellently that he might almost claim them as his own, if he could only write that well. And so the acquaintance and association which was to last more than fifty years began. Alcott called again upon Miss Peabody and the two expert conversationalists discovered new similarities in their views on education and theology. The visit must have been most stimulating, for Alcott's *Journal* record (February 10, 1829) was considerably more enthusiastic than it had been after his previous visit:

I was much pleased with the thoughts expressed in the course of this interview. Miss Peabody is certainly a very sensible lady. She has a mind of superiour order. In its range of thought, in the philosophical discrimination, and originality of its character, I have seldom, if ever, found a female mind to equal it. Her notions of character, the nicety of her analysis, her accurate

knowledge of the human mind, are remarkably original and just. Her views of morals very liberal and just. I was better pleased with her as a whole than I had expected to be; and shall repeat my visits, at her request.⁶

Like Alcott, Elizabeth Peabody was looking for "Minds." She was associated with Dr. W. E. Channing, then the leading thinker of Boston, as secretary, and was in a position to know a superior mind when she met one. She, too, visited Alcott's school. She was not just a philanthropically inclined lady like the Patrons of the Infant School, though she was that; she was a teacher of experience and uncommon skill. It is, therefore, highly significant that she should acknowledge Alcott as master in this respect. She later wrote to him, "From the first time I ever saw you with a child, I have felt and declared that you had more genius for education than I ever saw, or expected to see. I am vain enough to say that you are the only one I ever saw who, I soberly thought, surpassed myself in the general conception of this divinest of arts."⁷

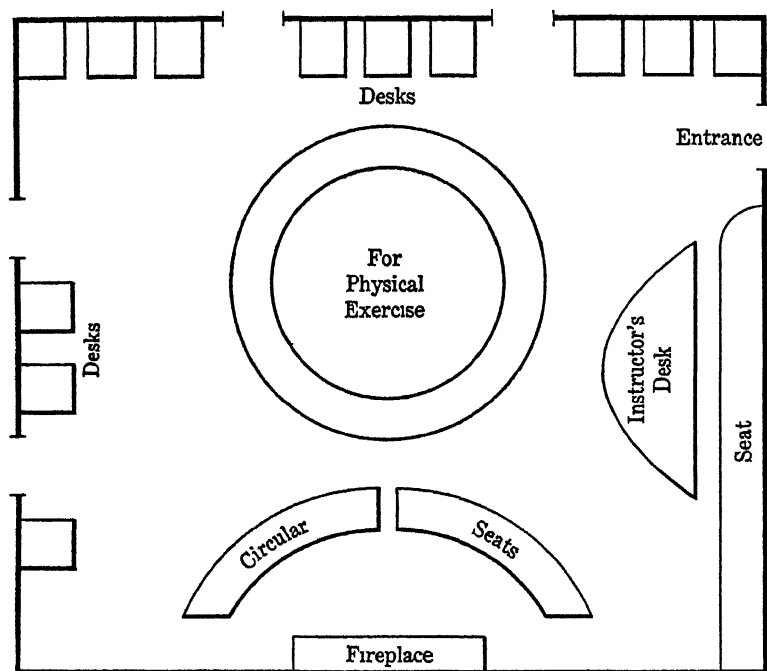
With professional friends like William Russell, Samuel May, and Elizabeth Peabody, and personal encouragement from Abba May, Alcott felt sure of his ground as he left the infant school, and opened his own private school.

This school, first on Common Street, and later moved to Tremont Street, began very auspiciously. There were ten pupils the first day, and sixteen shortly thereafter. This was a type of school much needed in Boston, for the Latin School did not take boys until they were nine and well-to-do parents would not consider sending their children to the public schools, where the masters were likely to be inferior and brutal. Alcott was delighted with the kind of pupil who came to him; it was just the type he had always wanted to

⁶ Alcott Journals, February 18, 1829. Quoted in Odell Shepard, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, 1937, 128.

⁷ *Pedlar's Progress*, 128 f.

experiment upon. The school room was planned to suit the informal character of the school, though the desks about the sides of the room were reminiscent of the Cheshire arrangement. But the seats about the fireplace and the large circle for physical exercise were quite like a modern kindergarten or elementary room.



Bronson Alcott's Schoolroom, Tremont Street

When the children came into the schoolroom in the morning, they sat down in a circle about the fireplace and began to tell about the things that interested them. Everyone was allowed to talk freely and whatever followed depended chiefly on what the children had said. Sometimes Alcott told a story, perhaps illustrating something in one

of the children's stories. Sometimes he dictated words, or had the children copy exercises from the board, but the exercise varied each day. Worcester's *Primer*, Fowle's *Child's Arithmetic*, and *Popular Lessons* were the only class books used. By drawing the lessons from the child's everyday life, Alcott, felt that he was approaching the very root of moral education. To make daily occurrences a means of improving character was his chief province and interest.

Alcott and the children had a game of "synonymizing" that they both enjoyed very much. He would write a statement on the board, and then they would suggest synonyms for the words he had used. All this was done with much conversation, and the result was something like this:

WE	LIVE	TO LEARN	TO BE GOOD	AND HAPPY
People The pupils School-fellows Men & women Lads—folks All people Everybody All things Animals Birds	are born come into the world begin to awaken exist	know how get knowledge find out think see	amiable obedient not naughty do right not like Cain like Abel affectionate	joyful gleeful agreeable

When the time for refreshment arrived, it gave Alcott an opportunity to observe the characters of his little charges with respect to generosity and selfishness. Elizabeth Peabody has given a graphic picture of Alcott standing in the midst of his pupils, discussing the disposition of the last apple. The incident illustrated Alcott's method of government, his appeal to the "common conscience." Another day, as he read a story, the children had all got into an eager confusion, and the teacher put the book on his knee.

"Why don't I go on?"

"Because we are all making such a noise," they replied. He did not bid them be still, but waited patiently until they had brought themselves to order, and then read on. When

he had finished, he told them he was very glad that they had governed themselves.

Alcott's school attracted so much attention that the continual presence of visitors began to embarrass the children. He himself was alternately encouraged and depressed about the progress of the school. During this time, though, Alcott was frequently taking the long walk out to Brookline where Abba May was staying, and on his return from these visits he suffered the usual mental ups and downs of an uncertain lover. He described his health as "imperfect" and his imagination "morbid," but both improved when the lady accepted him. On the whole, he was very much pleased with the success of this school, and by December, 1829, he thought he could see in his pupils a spirit of inquiry that was due to his teaching. He was particularly pleased when one Sunday School teacher told him that she found his pupils more inquisitive and intelligent than those who had been trained in the conventional schools.

At this time, Alcott was invited to teach the "children of the Free Enquirer," or Owenites. He was to leave out disputed points in his system and teach only that which could be demonstrated to the senses and perceptions of the children. The salary would have been a thousand or twelve hundred dollars a year, more than twice what he had ever made, but Alcott did not even consider the proposition. Something had definitely changed his old enthusiasm. He had read the *New Harmony Gazette* for 1827-28, and was pleased at the time with its general views of society and marriage, although he expressed a mild dislike at its attacks on the Christian religion. Miss Frances Wright, famous as an advocate of free love, had visited him in July, presenting him with a pamphlet of a lecture, "On Existing Evils and their Remedy." It proposed a rational system of education, which Alcott appeared to think desirable, though not yet practicable. But he had subscribed to the *Free Enquirer*,

and it was doubtless the attacks on Christianity in that magazine which changed his attitude. At this period Robert Owen was debating the evidences of Christianity with Alexander Campbell, and the keeping of the Sabbath also received particular attack in the columns of the *Free Enquirer* in the latter months of 1829. Far from feeling that the society was the means for the regeneration of mankind, it was, Alcott now believed, indifferent to everything truly good—"a low party in religion." He would have nothing to do with them.

By this time Alcott's principles of instruction were fairly well established, and he felt he needed something more than classroom instruction to occupy his mind. He went so far as to outline a rather ambitious work on elementary education, comprising general principles, responsibilities of parents, principles and methods of physical, moral and intellectual education, the influence of nature, self education, and harmony of education. This project never materialized, but Alcott published in September, 1830, an essay, or pamphlet on infant instruction.

This pamphlet seems to have been written to compete for a prize of one hundred dollars offered by the Controllers of the Public Schools of the First School District of Pennsylvania for the best "system of school discipline, lessons, and other means adapted to the instruction of children under five years of age, which shall embrace economy, efficiency, and simplicity in its details." Although Alcott's essay did not win the prize, Mr. Roberts Vaux, President of the Board of Controllers, was so much impressed with it that he wrote to Alcott urging its publication:

Thy essay I have attentively read; it afforded me more pleasure and instruction than anything of the kind which has come under my notice. It is strongly marked by practical wisdom and pure Christian philosophy, and is worthy a place in every family in our country. . . . I will use every means to aid

in the diffusion of such doctrines as thy communication teaches, assured that their adoption by parents and teachers would administer incalculable blessings to the rising generation.⁸

When the *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction* was published, Vaux bought seventy-five publisher's copies for distribution. Though the pamphlet bears certain likenesses to the earlier ones written by Wilderspin, Wilson and others, it has a definitely original character, and is a clearer statement of belief than is usual in Alcott's writings.

Though Alcott had been most successful in Boston, he was eager for wider opportunities of testing his theories and of spreading them among other teachers. As he had been married, May 23, 1830, to Miss May, he was quite ready to accept a change which might improve his general economic and social position, though his principles forbade the acceptance of the *Free Enquirer* offer. He had been a candidate for one of the public schools of Boston, and was gratified by his "near approach to an election." (This was his usual way of recording a failure.) When, therefore, Alcott was invited to go with William Russell to teach in Germantown, he gladly accepted the offer. He closed his school November 5th, and left Boston for Philadelphia in December, 1830.

Alcott and Russell went to Philadelphia upon the invitation of Reuben Haines, a wealthy Quaker of Germantown, who was interested in education. The change seems to have been made without sufficient investigation, for when the two men arrived in Germantown, they found that there were already an academy and a manual labor school in operation there. Neither school was very satisfactory, to be sure, but they were in possession of the field, and the prospects of a new school were decidedly unpromising. Alcott

⁸ Franklin B. Sanborn and William T. Harris, *A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, 1893, I, 153 f.

and Russell considered returning to Philadelphia and opening a school there, but as it would take a year to make arrangements, that plan was given up. It was therefore decided to open a female department of the Germantown Academy, Russell teaching the young ladies and Alcott the children. The prospectus was carefully worded to capitalize upon the fair name and goodwill of the Germantown Academy, and at the same time to make it clear that the female department would be in separate buildings and have none of the disadvantages of the existing institution. Alcott's school began May 2, 1831, with five children in a school room in his house.

Mrs. Alcott wrote enthusiastically to her brother describing the house, whose neatness and order rivalled that of Federal Court, her father's home in Boston. The garden she described as "lined with raspberries, currants, gooseberry bushes, a large ground with a beautiful serpentine walk shaded with pines, firs, cedars, apple, pear, peach, and plum trees, a long cedar hedge from the back to the front fence." Reuben Haines was very considerate about furnishing the house and schoolroom tastefully, but he died in October, 1832, without making any provision for the school, so that it was left without a patron. The enterprise, beginning so inauspiciously, never captured Alcott's imagination, as it did his wife's. His primary attention was centered upon his reading, philosophical conversation with William Russell, and psychological observations of his first child, Anna, born in Germantown, March 16, 1831. Under these circumstances, it is small wonder that the school dwindled. It was closed in the spring of 1833, after which Alcott opened a school in Philadelphia for one term.

The exercises in these Pennsylvania schools were much like those described for the one in Boston, except that the psychological and moral aspects of the instruction were more emphasized. The school was rather a laboratory for the ob-

servation of human growth than a place for the communication of knowledge, and was of as much benefit to Alcott as to the children who attended it. Near the end of the period, the formal array of the schoolroom was almost entirely done away with, and the time was passed chiefly in conversation with the children on subjects "adapted to their apprehensions" and "best suited to the expansion of their natures." This program, however, was but preparatory to Alcott's main purpose of studying and experimenting on man, of forming just opinions regarding his nature and destiny.

A number of the compositions of Alcott's pupils were published in the *Annals of Education*, in 1832 and 1833. Though the school was in operation but a short time, it seems to have been rather influential in the lives of some of the pupils. The first edition of *Record of a School* contains a very unusual letter from a little girl, Elizabeth Lewis, and also one from William Furness, son of Dr. W. H. Furness. Almost fifty years later, Louisa Alcott, in Philadelphia, saw Elizabeth Lewis, who recalled the days of the Germantown group as some of the happiest of her life. Charles Godfrey Leland, who became one of the most popular poets of the latter half of the century, was another of this group, but he was not so complimentary as Elizabeth Lewis in his reminiscences. In his *Memoirs* he referred to Alcott as "the most eccentric man who ever took it on himself to train and form the youthful mind." As a boy, Leland was an omnivorous reader and Alcott encouraged the tendency. In fact, after Alcott had talked about the "Faerie Queene," and had read extracts from it, Leland went on and read the whole book, although he was only nine years old. Leland says that Alcott read thoroughly into them *Pilgrim's Progress*, Quarles' *Emblems*, Northcote's *Fables*, and much Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Milton, thus educating them "ideally" at the utter cost of all "real education."⁹ It is hard to see

⁹ Charles Godfrey Leland, *Memoirs*, London, 1893, I, 63 f.

what sort of education could be more "real" for a lad destined to be a poet. In this instance, Alcott's failure as a teacher may be said to lie, not in his eccentricity, but in his failure to correct the superficiality and triviality that have made a once popular poet now only a name in an encyclopedia. Alcott felt something of this in 1881 when he heard Leland read the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa poem, for he commented that the work was "right in tone, but deficient in poetic excellencies."

Alcott's lack of enthusiasm for these schools was both a cause and an effect of their small attendance. As his fascination in the observation of his children became greater, Alcott grew to feel that he was wasting his time "drilling a half-dozen little ones." He should be writing so that thousands, rather than a few, might receive the benefits of ideas of whose correctness he was increasingly certain. In Boston, Alcott's schoolroom was important as the proving-ground of his theories, but in Philadelphia the school was relatively unimportant. The practical ground work had been laid, and a philosophy of education was gradually shaping itself in Alcott's mind under the triple influences of William Russell, books, and psychological observations. These early teaching years had been a period of learning chiefly by doing. He had read books, to be sure, some of them important ones like William Godwin's *Political Justice*, Robert Owen's *New Views*, and John Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, but never had Alcott had access to a great library, never had he read the great thinkers of all times. His own thinking and practice had by this time outstripped his reading background. Here in Germantown and Philadelphia, Alcott had, for the first time, opportunity to read widely and leisure to put his reading, his thinking, and his doing together.

CHAPTER IV

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUNDS

"Time doth but tell the story of the Spirit's doings, and the true historian is he who doth apprehend its features and will aright. Every man's life is but a phase of the *One Divine Nature* that flows through all visible things, by whose subtle breath all are fed and sustained."

Alcott Journals, January, 1837

IN THE first six years of Alcott's teaching, the school had been the center of his life. He kept discovering new things, first about his profession, and then about children. In Philadelphia, though, it was different. There his chief stimulation came from outside his school. The change came about, however, very easily and naturally. As Alcott began his teaching in Connecticut, he was at first carried away by the apparent power in the hands of the schoolmaster, and he began to experiment, gravely, prayerfully, finding better ways to use that power. His first efforts were in the direction of external changes, and, working with his Cousin William, he let in light and air, designed new furniture, and introduced slates and blackboards. These were genuine innovations, which were accepted rather rapidly, even though the cost was at first objected to. However, in the process of making physical changes, Alcott's thinking employed, more and more, terms in their psychological meanings. As his teaching with such tangible aids as slates and blocks of wood developed, he began to wonder how children did learn. He watched them more carefully. He saw that they reacted to the pleasing appearance of the schoolroom, and to the pleasant, affectionate manner of

the teacher, and he thought they learned better under such circumstances. And so, for a time in Alcott's teaching, he searched for better and better ways of teaching in accordance with "the laws of thought."

He kept going deeper and deeper. The children sometimes said the most amazing things, things that had no apparent connection with observable circumstance. What were the laws of thought? As Alcott went from the common schools of Connecticut, where he taught children of all school ages, to the Boston infant school of two-to-four-year olds, he noticed a great change. These little children were more frank, more naive. They had not learned to hide their feelings in deference to the ideas of adults. Alcott saw here that children are primarily active, and so he let them play, and he watched. He saw another thing. He saw that they did more than respond to the stimuli about them; they were self-initiating. Their drives to action seemed to come from within themselves. That would take some thinking about. What were the implications for a schoolmaster?

And more, what were the implications of such observations for a psychologist, or a philosopher? For by this time, teaching five children in Germantown did not occupy much of Alcott's thought and energy. In Germantown, too, there were no Sunday School Associations, no reform meetings, and no Unitarian sermons to occupy him. Rather, Alcott had, for the first time, access to great libraries and leisure to read; he had daily association with his friend William Russell; and he had his infant daughter Anna. These might lead him to answer the questions he had begun to wonder about. In the lives of many men there may be discovered some point upon which all lines of thought seem to converge, some event for which all others were but preparatory. So it was with Alcott. All things, but chiefly these three—his daughter Anna, his friend William Russell, and great books—combined to make Alcott a transcendental thinker. Events might

well have been contrived to keep him from thinking—he might have been too busy, or he might have had no stimulation—but the fates arranged otherwise.

It was with the intent of a scientist that Alcott turned to observe his daughter Anna, who was born in Germantown, March 16, 1831. Within ten days of her birth, he had commenced "an Historical account of the Development of the Intellect and Moral Conduct of my little girl, from birth, to be continued as her mind and heart make progress." The history of a human mind, he felt, begun in infancy by the parent and carried on by the child when he was able, would be a treasure of greater value to the world than all the philosophical systems ever built up. It would be a history of human nature. Before Anna was born, Alcott had seen in *Nicholson's Journal* an article on observations of a child. The idea caught fire with him, but the conclusions of the article, he thought, were imaginative and unsound. He would try to avoid that, in his observations. And so, he set out to be a fact-finder.

To be sure, Alcott was not the sort of fact-finder who delighted in facts. He wanted to know what they meant. He observed his new-born child that he might discover the birth of Soul, and the foundations of character. He wanted to find out something about Body and Mind, how they were related, how they worked. It is breath-taking to see this untrained man set himself, a hundred years before Arnold Gesell, the specific scientific task of observing children. For help, he turned to all the scientific books he could find. He read chiefly Broussais' *Physiology*, Jackson's *Principles of Medicine* and Combe's *Phrenology*. But unfortunately, Alcott never defined with sufficient precision the object of his search. He made patient, minute, regular physiological and psychological observations, but he was not primarily interested in physical and mental development. If that had been his object, he might have succeeded in anticipating some of

the discoveries of modern psychologists. In his search for the Soul he became lost:

I sit down to make some remarks on the lives and circumstances of my children, but e'er I am aware I have left the consideration of them as individuals and have merged their separate existences into the common life of the Spirit. I have left their terrestrial life, with the varied phenomena that typify its action, and am roaming at large over the domain of the celestial world—beholding not only these, my children, in the gladsome existence there, but also the unnumberable children of the Infinite Parent Himself, the common Father.¹⁰

As Alcott failed to find his answer with Anna, he tried again with Louisa, who was born in Germantown on her father's birthday, November 29, 1832; and a third time, with Elizabeth, born in Boston, June 24, 1835. From the dark, dynamic Louisa, Bronson Alcott may never have expected to discover much about the Soul, for she was not a "child of light." The fiery-tempered Louisa taught her father, perhaps, more of the "Demon" than of Soul. Alcott persevered, however. The progress of his investigations is reflected in the titles of the manuscripts in which his records were kept. He began very strictly with "Observations on An Infant." Then came "The Breath of Childhood," "Evangele," and finally, "Psyche." This last manuscript represents the refined gold of three observations, and the dross of many, many rewritings. But the more Alcott wrote, the more coy his subject became, and there was little hint of Psyche in the final draft.

What did Alcott mean by Psyche, or Soul? Partly, he used the word in a religious sense, to mean the spiritual, aspiring part of man's being. At other times it was meant to refer to the intellect, to the active agent in the learning process; and sometimes Alcott used the word with a hint of the physiological *élan vital* in his meaning. Perhaps the soul does

¹⁰ Shepard, *Pedlar's Progress*, 143.

manifest itself in those various ways, perhaps its chief characteristic is its illimitability. But a single man cannot do all things at once. Alcott was seeking, not whatever answer his data produced, but was attempting to discover by objective means something which did not exist in a substantive form.

At the same time that one records Alcott's failure either to make a scientific "contribution to knowledge" or to discover the elusive birth of Soul, one must applaud the reasonableness of his attempt, as well as its daring. He was seeking to understand the manifestations of spiritual law in the natural universe. The soul was in all things, yet not of them; it caused change, yet was itself changeless. It was at once the doer and the thing done. Alcott never encompassed Psyche on the bulky pages of his manuscripts, but he grew more and more sure of her presence.

Standing behind Alcott in this research, this philosophic seeking to discover the relations of mind and body, was William Russell, who, like Alcott, is one of the unsung heroes of American education. Today he is but a name, if that, and yet Alcott considered Russell in a sense the father of most of the improvements made since his coming to Boston and editing the *American Journal of Education*. This magazine infused into American education "the spirit of more genial and philosophical methods of instruction," according to Alcott. Russell was a Scotsman, trained under Jardine at Glasgow in the severe logic of Scottish philosophy, and he contributed to the group of American educators a broad culture it had hitherto lacked. In his magazine he was among the first to publish accounts of the aims and methods of Pestalozzi, Fellenburg, Wilderspin, and others. In this respect, Russell was an important forerunner of Horace Mann and other reformers, for they succeeded in carrying out liberal ideas first published in the *Journal*.

Aside from his editorial work, Russell's field was literature and elocution. Some of the gentlemen of Boston used



WILLIAM RUSSELL

My thought revives at utterance of thy name,—
Doth high behavior, sweet discourse recall,
Lit with emotion's quick and quenchless flame,
Imagination interfused through all,
Then peals thy voice melodious on mine ear,
As when grave anthems thou didst well recite,—
Laodamia's vision sad and dear,
Or "Thanatopsis," or "Hail, Holy Light!"
Thou true Professor, gifted to dispense
New pathos, e'en to Channing's eloquence,
If mother tongue they fail to speak or write,
Nor Greek nor Latin draw they pupils thence,
Such culture, taught by the far Northern sea,
This scholar brings, New England, home to thee

ALCOTT, *Sonnets*

to hold weekly reading parties at which Russell instructed them in the art of oral reading. In private, his conversation was especially entertaining, varied by anecdotes, rich in classical allusion, and free from pedantry, while his slight Scottish accent gave an agreeable burr to his speech. He later taught elocution in girls' schools and various colleges in New England, where, Alcott thought, his methods "became the standard for pulpit and platform, modifying favorably the speech of both." To his training and association with William Russell may be attributed much of Alcott's success as a conversationalist.

Bronson Alcott's long and close association with William Russell was one of the happiest incidents in his life, and William Russell is the only man among Alcott's acquaintance to whom he ever expressed a direct indebtedness. He wrote, in 1832:

. . . Conversation and thought with him have done more for me than any other outward advantage, and without these I should not now have stood where I do in an intellectual and social point of view. I look upon our speculations during the past year as among the most valuable fruits of my life—as the beginning of a new era in my career of inquiry; and as likely to exert a predominating influence over all its subsequent stages. They have advanced me a two or three years' progress, unaided and alone.

What kind of man, then, was William Russell? What were his basic beliefs? How did his mind work? Such questions are not answered in the short accounts of him in the biographical dictionaries, but the letters he wrote to Alcott after the latter's return to Boston do give some indication of what he was like. They reveal a mind of deep religious sensibilities, though Russell, like Alcott, had no use for the creeds and sects of religion. His central theme was the indwelling spirit in man, recorded in the life of Jesus. Russell considered that morality should be but an "emanation of the indwelling

life," and so he devoted himself to the spiritual strengthening of man.

It must be said that none of these ideas was new to Alcott. The thing that stands out about Russell, though, is a directive vigor that shines even through the "lavish rhetoric" of his letters and gives a hint of the influence that must have attended daily association with so powerful a personality. On November 18, 1835, he wrote to Alcott:

You are, I trust, silently teaching adults a more genuine faith in man than has hitherto prevailed. You will succeed, I hope, in convincing many that to influence man aright we must operate in the region in which he's above volition, and shed down light and direction that we must recognize the divine part of the human constitution and treat children as beings of celestial origin and destination. It is thus, and thus only that we can ever be consummate *Man*. . . .

It is now as it was of old; the Tree of Life is at hand, but man prefers to put forth his hand to the Tree of Knowledge. I see you occasionally (in spirit) plucking from the golden boughs of the former to hand to your young charge. This is the distinctive trait of your teaching as it appears to my mind. Are your processes things to be *understood*, or are they things to be felt in Love and realized in the ultimate life?

This last sentence of Russell's epitomizes the change in Alcott's teaching that took place in this transitional period. Up to now, he had considered education to be a *rational* process, as did John Locke and Robert Owen, and he had done his best to appeal to the understanding of his pupils. After this period, however, such efforts became secondary, and his teaching was always directed toward the development of spiritual life.

It was probably from William Russell that Alcott got his first conception of philosophy as a process of reasoning, not as one of day-dreams or intuitional speculations. This is not to say that Russell taught Alcott to think logically. Alcott had an orderly mind—he loved to place things in lists—but

it was not a logical instrument. Alcott learned, though, how the trained mind works. Russell used many diagrams to illustrate his points, and Alcott, too, learned to schematize his ideas.

It is quite probable that Russell was largely instrumental in directing Alcott's thought to the fundamental question of the nature of man and the source of mental life. He wrote to Alcott, August 13, 1835: "The laws of the generation of thought must be observed, if we wish to cherish genuine and vivid, not mechanical and powerless, thought. According to the internal, not less than the external constitution of man, thought is a legitimate result of a train of causes." Alcott's observations of his daughters might well be interpreted as an attempt to seek the ultimate cause.

Although Alcott's thinking was stimulated, his original moral and spiritual bent strengthened by association with William Russell, the two men never adopted an identical philosophy. Russell's view of the soul was an aspirational one of upward striving, as befitted a Scotsman. He spoke of the soul merging itself in "the conscious willing I—living and moving in the grand unity of Being." Alcott approached the theory more analytically, and grew to place more stress on descent or lapse, rather than on aspiration. But such differences could only strengthen the bond between two strong men, each profoundly interested in the moral improvement of man through education. Alcott realized at the time what a privilege it was to have William Russell for friend and daily companion, and at the time of Russell's death he wrote this tribute in his *Journal*, August 19, 1873:

My friend was first of my contemporaries to appreciate any gifts of mine that later friends and acquaintances have since recognized and acknowledged. My debt to him is greater than I know for suggestions literary and religious. His sympathy with my endeavors has been most grateful and encouraging. Nor have I known among American Teachers any one who more completely filled my idea of an educator.

Bronson Alcott's reading fits perfectly into the Germantown pattern of teaching a little, observing his daughters, talking with William Russell, and thinking much. Up to now, he had not had a great deal of time for reading, and it had been limited first by lack of books, and then, by his intense interest in education. In that field he had read John Locke, Robert Owen, Pestalozzi, the books on infant schools, and the *American Journal of Education* from cover to cover, of course. It was with a great sort of hunger that Alcott approached the libraries of Philadelphia. One wonders how he knew what to read, but William Russell was there all the time, and William Ellery Channing part of the time, and no two men were better suited to guide the reading of a transcendentalist in the making.

If Bronson Alcott made false starts in his reading, we would never know about them, for he never read a book unless it had something for him. He had no compulsion to read a book through just because he had started it. In fact, he seldom read a book through. If he found an "encouraging correspondence" that sent him off on his own train of thought, so much the better. That book had served its purpose. Among the books which, he says, gave his mind great impetus are Cousin's *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, Combe's *Phrenology*, Broussais' *Physiology*, and Jackson's *Principles of Medicine*, "viewed in connection with the spiritual principle"; Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* and *The Friend*; the *Life and Works of Byron*, and Biber's *Life of Pestalozzi*. With one exception, these books are representative of the important trends in Alcott's reading.

The scientific books, as has been noted, were designed to help Alcott in his observations on his children. The phrenologists were worth the consideration of one seeking a knowledge of spirit, for if their theories were correct, by an analysis of exterior manifestations, a phrenologist should have been able to predict the predominance of certain spir-

itual qualities. Accordingly, then, in addition to George Combe, Alcott read several works by and about Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, but he never adopted a belief in phrenology. Alcott, who considered spirit the "architect of nature" could not fail to be attracted to Erasmus Darwin's *Temple of Nature*. The number of scientific books Alcott read is not large, but their comparative importance is great, since he had previously read nothing in this field.

At this time Alcott's very considerable knowledge of Pestalozzi was augmented by E. Biber's carefully written biography. The book could tell him little he did not know, for he had bought the *Mother's Book* in New York on his trip visiting infant schools in 1829, and by 1833 he had also read *Leonard and Gertrude* and Pestalozzi's letters to Greaves. Alcott recorded in his Journals that Biber's biography encouraged him to persevere in the field of elementary education and to do here, if possible, something analogous to what Pestalozzi had accomplished in his country. Now, as always, Alcott continued to read the *American Journal of Education* very carefully, and to note important articles in his diary. The *British Journal of Education* appeared for the first time during this period, and was compared with its American counterpart. Alcott now, for the first time, read other periodicals than those devoted to education, among them the *North American Review*, the *American Quarterly Review*, and the *Christian Examiner*.

Alcott's excursions into general literature widened his horizons immensely. As a boy he had read good literature—Milton, Cowper, Thomson, and Bunyan, but since then he had read very little. This reading, then, marks a real literary renaissance for Alcott. He particularly enjoyed the English romantic poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, who, with Milton, he considered the "first poets in the language." Wordsworth had the advantage of saying for him his own best thoughts and intuitions, for Alcott was

literal in his acceptance of the ideas about children in the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," for example. Coleridge the philosopher and religious thinker was such a shining light to Alcott that he had little to say about the man as a poet. In October, 1832, he wrote:

In Coleridge in particular there are passages of surpassing beauty and deep wisdom. He seems to have studied man more thoroughly, and to understand him better, than any previous poetic writer, unless it be Wordsworth. And his prose writings are full of splendid ideas clothed in the most awful and imposing imagery. There is in this man's soul a deep well of wisdom, and it is a wisdom not of earth. No writer ever benefited me more than he has done.¹¹

The presence of the life and works of Byron on Alcott's list of important books seems odd at first glance. It was, of course, not the Byron of *Don Juan* that would appeal to Alcott (he would ignore such a poem), but Byron's humanitarian efforts in Italy and Greece; and Moore's account of his pathetic death at Missolonghi in the service of human freedom could not but touch Alcott.

"The frequent perusal of poetry seems necessary to the vigor, vivacity and freshness of the mind," wrote Alcott, but it was chiefly the philosophic message or the symbolism of poetry that he appreciated. He was much annoyed at the criticism of Shelly's personal life, probably comparing it with the reaction to his own attempts at reform. Alcott must have recognized in Shelley, too, that ethereal quality that was a kindred element in his own character. He chose "Queen Mab" as the poem upon which Shelley's fame would chiefly rest.

Since Alcott liked the sort of volume in which he could read at random, the works of William Hazlitt were eminently satisfactory. He read not only Hazlitt's *Lectures on*

¹¹ Shepard, Editor, *Alcott Journals*, 32.

English Poets, and his *Select British Poets*, but the *Spirit of the Age*, and *Table Talk*. Lamb's *Elia* pleased Alcott's whimsical fancies and More's *Utopia* delighted his idealistic mind. Shakespeare Alcott now read for the first time, but in him Alcott found few "correspondencies." He was doubtless too earthy, and so Alcott read his work desultorily, "chiefly for the vocabulary."

Alcott never learned to read a foreign language, but, from the month he moved to Philadelphia (March, 1833) German literature in translation appeared on his reading lists. He was reading Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, and works of Victor Cousin or Coleridge might have further stimulated his interest. From the standpoint of the growth of Alcott's philosophy, perhaps no book was more important than F. A. Nitsch's *View of Professor Kant's Principles concerning Man, the World, and the Deity*. From this book Alcott copied out ninety-four of Kant's theoretical principles into his Commonplace Book for 1833. This means that Alcott had knowledge of Kant, other than through the interpretations of Coleridge and other English transcendentalists.

Other philosophical reading was important as well. Alcott used three histories of philosophy—those by Cousin, Formay, and Fennerman, though he was not at all interested in the history of ideas. He liked historical writings only when they demonstrated to him the truth of his own beliefs. In the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, especially that on "Influx, Correspondence, and Faith" Alcott would find much to his liking. He had always looked at the world in terms of allegories, hence Swedenborg's doctrine of the "correspondence" of natural phenomena and spiritual realities merely served Alcott as proof that truth is of no particular time or place.

Coleridge was the most important of the English philosophers, as Alcott now read *Aids to Reflection*, *The Friend*, *Biographia Literaria*, and *Lay Sermons*. Locke had previously

been read rather completely, so that only the discussion of "innate ideas" appears on this list. It was probably reread in connection with some of the theories which attempted to discredit it. Bacon, however, was read in the *Novum Organum*, the *Advancement of Learning*, and the *Interpreter of Nature*. Alcott strongly approved of Bacon's inductive methods, and felt that Bacon relied on the spiritual principle, though there was nowhere a definite statement of it. "*He beheld all things in the concrete.*"

Alcott's classical readings began with Aristotle's *Ethics* and the volumes he used, carefully annotated, remain in his library today. Aristotle, as well as Bacon, appealed to the pedagogic Alcott, and he describes his devotion to their teachings at the same time that he tells of one of the most important events in his educational history. He says, "In 1833 I was a disciple of Experience, trying to bring my theories within the Baconian method of induction, and took the philosophy of Aristotle as the exponent of humanity while my heart was even then lingering around the theories of Plato without being conscious of it. A follower of Aristotle was I in theory, yet a true Platonist in practice." ¹²

The discovery of Plato served to inaugurate a new period in Alcott's thinking. He wrote, in May, 1833, "Plato I had long wished to read, but could never before find a translation. It had long been my impression that there were in his writings great and profound ideas which the light of existing thought and science had not been bright enough to attain." ¹³ Alcott read the *Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*, and at the time supposed these "fragments" were all of Plato that Taylor had translated. It was natural that Alcott should read Proclus and Plotinus immediately afterward, for Thomas Taylor felt that the Neo-Platonic ideas represented by these men were necessary to an understanding

¹² Shepard, Editor, *Alcott Journals*, 66 f.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

of Plato. It would be futile, then, to try to distinguish Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas in Alcott's thinking, for they were presented to him as one. It would be equally impossible to try to assert that Plato contributed any particular doctrines to Bronson Alcott's thinking.

In Plato, Alcott found a world where he could live, a world he was later to make seem "as solid as Massachusetts" to Emerson. In Plato, Alcott found expressed an intuitive theory of knowledge which agreed with his own experience, and he found spirit set forth as the unconditioned substance upon which all conditioned experience is based. In the doctrine of nature as the shadow, or copy, of the primal Idea, Alcott found a further clue to the relationship he had been trying to discover through his children. This Platonic theory explained, as the Lockian could not, man's direct relationship with the Supreme Being. Of the validity of this idea Alcott now had no doubts.

Reinforced in this belief by one of the great minds of all time, Alcott set down a bold attack on the "dead and corrupt materialism" of the contemporary Lockian philosophy. Locke had asserted that all phenomena were based on the operation of the law of cause and effect, thus making no distinction between the natural and the spiritual. To Alcott the conclusions from such a premise were necessarily false: "It [modern philosophy, or Locke] shuts God from the universe, and, carried to its legitimate issues, results in Pantheism building up on an inconceivable basis the whole fabrick of religion, which it must assume as independent of man, and nature. It makes of exterior nature a self-existent substance, and sees not in the laws and vicissitudes of things the movement of spirit."¹⁴ With the reading of Plato, however, all these illusions of Lockian theory were swept away. Alcott saw clearly "what before was obscured by the gloss of exterior matter—spirit all in all—matter its form and shadow."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

Alcott's spiritual philosophy was not completed upon the discovery of Plato, however; as he read Coleridge, there grew in his mind a conception of Jesus Christ as the physical embodiment of God or Spirit, which added to Alcott's philosophy a Christian element it had hitherto lacked. The reading of *Aids to Reflection*, *The Friend*, and the *Biographia Literaria* served Alcott both from the point of view of philosophical theory and of religious experience. In *The Friend*, Coleridge has set forth a method of scientific thought which he had formulated after an examination of many systems of philosophy. The most notable characteristic of this method is its reconciliation of Plato's idealism and Bacon's material view of the world. Coleridge correlates the two in this fashion:

Thus the difference, or rather distinction between Plato and Lord Bacon is simply this that philosophy being necessarily bipolar, Plato treats principally of the truth, as it manifests itself at the *ideal* pole, as the science of intellect (i.e. *de mundo intelligibili*); while Bacon confines himself, for the most part, to the same truth, as it is manifested at the other, or material pole, as the science of nature (i.e. *de mundo sensibili*).¹⁵

Coleridge thus corroborated Alcott's feeling (it was scarcely more than that) that Bacon was, in some way, related to the spiritual principle. By applying Aristotelian logic to the principles of intuitive knowledge, Coleridge gave philosophic respectability to the doctrines which formed the basis of the transcendental philosophy. Alcott particularly delighted in Coleridge's eclecticism—his inclusion of Plato, Aristotle, Jesus, Bacon, and the German philosophers in one system.

It was as a religious thinker that Coleridge most affected Alcott, however. In the latter part of his life and in the generation that followed, Coleridge was ranked by many young

¹⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, Burlington, Vermont, 1831, 431.

clergymen of liberal views as the greatest religious thinker of their time, and he did much to deepen and liberalize religious thought in England and the United States. After reading Coleridge, Alcott realized that he had been studying outward phenomena in his search for the origin of human powers, without a sense of the grounds on which phenomena were dependent for their form and existence. Coleridge lifted him out of this difficulty and turned his attention to Spirit, not as an abstract entity, but as manifested in Jesus Christ. The lights of Aristotle, Plato, Bacon were all lost in the "transparent radiance of the gospel of Christ." This enthusiasm was not a temporary one—in 1836 Alcott read *Aids to Reflection* for the fifth time with unabated interest. It was likewise this philosophy of Jesus Christ as the emblem of spirit which became embodied in the practice of the Temple School. Evidences of Alcott's high regard for Coleridge recur throughout the journals. In him, Alcott felt, were blended the poet and the philosopher; a teeming, vivid imagination, and a profound, clear understanding, each reflecting light and beauty on the other. Of Coleridge's service to his own age and to the future, Alcott wrote, January 17, 1836:

Coleridge was not of this age but of one to come; and the aspiring of this, and coming time, will be led, by his prophetic vision, to the perception of the era, of which the present is only the herald. They must look through his *Eye* and behold that which they are seeking. In this lieth his greatness—not that he hath created aught anew, or declared aught before unknown—but that he hath erected a Telescope, and pointed it towards the Spiritual Country, so that all who will make discoveries, or view the Divine Realities of *Humanity*, or of *Divinity*, shall accept his guidance, use his instruments, with grateful and reverential hearts! . . . The English tongue is restored to its purity in his writings; and where will the thoughtful find more to enkindle and enlighten, than in the pages of '*The Friend*'—the '*Biographia*' and the '*Aids to Reflection*'!

What effect did all these varied types of reading have upon Alcott's philosophy? This was a question that Bronson Alcott asked of himself. Books, he felt, had called forth truths from the inward darkness in which his self-ignorance had wrapped them. The books he had read had encouraged him; and if they had not often supplied him with new views, they had held sympathetic communion on the way. His mind did not readily take the ideas of another, but ever sought to subordinate all facts to his own scheme of things. Yet he found it consoling to discover "that the mind, at various ages, and under all possible aspects, and circumstances, has taken similar views of truth. It shows how trifling is the influence of time and of institutions, on the vision of great minds; how these rise above all circumstances to behold the self-same truths, and, at their eras, to publish these to the world. *Truth is of no age nor nation; it is ever contemporaneous with genius and virtue.*" ¹⁶

From these crucial years of reading and study in Germantown and Philadelphia Alcott emerged with a transcendental philosophy sufficiently clear in his mind that he was able to work out its implications for education and to found a school to carry them out. Alcott's mind was large, all-inclusive, and yet his ability to select the pertinent was amazing. Alcott's story has to be told chronologically because it is a story of growth, growth as natural and inevitable as that of a flower or a tree. There are no breaks, no sudden jumps. It is not as though he was a rationalist today, an idealist tomorrow. An idea might be an intuition today, and by tomorrow it might be confirmed by experience or the testimony of other philosophy. And always, there was steady progression toward the spiritual principle.

In the years of growth between 1824 and 1834, Alcott recapitulated the intellectual experience of the past hundred years. He had begun by accepting the rationalism of

¹⁶ Alcott Journals, May, 1837.

Locke, reinforced by the environmentalism of Owen. He accepted the common view of the Revolutionary period that all men were, by nature, equal, and he agreed with Rousseau that men were innately good. Like Pestalozzi, he believed that inductive methods were best for teaching. Some of those beliefs, such as the innate goodness of man, represented intellectual advances on Alcott's part, and others he accepted rather unquestioningly. Some of the ideas survived the severe test of these years, and others changed, or disappeared. It is seldom that one gets a chance to watch a mind develop, as we do here by means of Bronson Alcott's Journals. And so we ask, what was the result of this experimenting with children, this reading, this thinking? When he left Philadelphia for Boston in 1834, Alcott would surely have stated his beliefs in some such terms as these:

If, as John Locke asserted, man has no means of knowledge but his five senses, then he can know only sensible qualities, material objects. He can be cognizant only of external nature, which to him, is what it appears. It is real, it is concrete; not symbolical, and not abstract. There are particulars, but no generals. A tree is a tree and nothing more. Truth and goodness are abstract nouns, useful in conversation, but devoid of real meaning. There can be good deeds, good men, but not goodness, conformity to which makes the individual deed or man a good one.

Is this the correct theory of the universe? Are things what they appear, and no more? Is the Thing itself only what is recognized by the senses, or is it rather the symbol, the sign of the real Thing? In man, the body is apparent to the senses, but does that constitute the Man? No, behind the sense phenomena lies the real Man, the physical manifestations are but indices to point to where the man is, and to what he does. The senses are not deceptive, but they can give only the sign and phenomenon, not the reality. What, then, is Reality? Does it lie immediately back of the world

of the senses? To attain to the Absolute Reality of all things one must find the Absolute Cause, which to be a cause must be free, self-sufficing, and self-acting. To be absolute, it must be one. As one pushes back the world of the senses, he reaches the world of reason, the "intelligible world"; and this intelligible world, in turn, must be resolved into the world of Absolute Unity. Absolute Unity, the sum total of all substance, is God, or Spirit. The unconditioned reality of existence is thus spiritual. If all power of causation is Spirit, and all Spirit is one, then an identity runs throughout God, Man, and Nature, all are one in the absolute unity of Spirit. "Spirit regarded as the cause and law of organization is God; Spirit organized is the universe; Spirit incarnated is man."

Man, as the first emanation in the scale of the universe, is God reproduced from himself. "He is spirit, doubled . . . by the self-generating act." The body, in its true state, is to the soul what the outward universe is to God—its sign and symbol. All the impulses of man must be good, having come from God, though his faculties are of three orders, corresponding to the three orders of the universe. Man is endowed, not merely with his five senses, but with reason, or understanding, and finally, with instinct, or faith, the means of apprehending God

The physical universe also has its reality in God, though it is lower in the scale than man, appealing to the lowest of his faculties, the senses. Nature is God "doubling himself in stone and wood":

"Verily the soul builds and wastes its own structures. But yet, nothing perishes. Nothing wastes. All is ceaseless mutation, transfiguration. Form alone changes. Essence abides. . . .

"Spirit! 'Tis the architect of nature. It builds her temples. It moulds her bodies. Life is its work. It clothes itself in Nature then anon it casts aside its robe. . . ." ¹⁷

¹⁷ Honoré Willsie Morrow, *The Father of Little Women*, Boston, 1927, 278.

Alcott's theory of education was designed in accordance with this concept of the nature of man, his three orders of faculties, and their relative importance. Since man has his being in God, the child, having come but recently from its heavenly abode, should have a more clear apprehension of divine truths than the adult, whose faculties have been clogged by the grossness and vulgarities of the physical world. Education, as commonly conceived, was ordered with reference to the world of the senses. Some few educators, of whom Alcott had earlier been one, endeavored to make it conform to the realm of the understanding. His new mission, however, was to cultivate the highest faculty, or instinct, as the means by which the child might know God.

If the child is, in very truth, a part of the being of God, then to reach a knowledge of God, he must look within himself, not in the external world. "Self-study leads to Self-knowledge; and this is indeed the knowledge of God, since it is by, and in this, that we know anything of him." The child must then "stand in awe of the divine nature that lives and rules within him, *Conscience* that never errs; *Faith*, that swerves not; *Love, Beauty, Justice, Right*—all these, great natures, which are the base and ground of his being, must be to him the angels of admission to God and heaven. Talk to him of outward nature as long as we will, he remains unconscious of God, save by communion with his own Spirit. Teach God, by *Spirit*, not *matter*." ¹⁸

As Alcott endeavored to teach God through Spirit, it was in Jesus Christ, he who, of all teachers, was most imbued with the force of Spirit, that he found the illustration of his theories. Alcott believed that since all men were a part of God, all men were divine. In his interpretation, then, Jesus Christ was divine in just the same way that all men are divine, except that he realized to a greater degree the potentialities of divinity inherent in all men. Jesus was conscious

¹⁸ Alcott Journals, March, 1837.

of his identity with God. In Alcott's wording, Jesus Christ, under the type of *Father* and *Son*, ever sought to signify the identical nature and essence of the divine *Force*; "now as apprehended in God, and now as felt in the human *Soul*." "He stated as no teacher had done before, the twin-life of all consciousness—its union and connexion, in all essential elements, with Spirit; which is its nature and vision. He taught that Spirit was the ground and law of all creating and created nature, and that the human *soul* was its type and image—*man*, Spirit in clay." If, in his school, Alcott could reproduce in children, as yet unspoiled, a consciousness of their identity with God, he would have, not only strong evidence of the correctness of his own views, but also important experimental proof of the truth of Christianity.

Alcott's educational aim, therefore, was to train up the children committed to his care in obedience to the dictates of the highest instincts of their natures. If he should succeed in realizing his aim, the result should be the perfect man, "armed at all points, to use the Body, Nature, and Life for his growth and renewal, and to hold dominion over the fluctuating things of the Outward." The implications of such a theory for society are tremendous. If, by making man aware of the source of his being, of his kinship with God, Alcott could create a nobler type of man, he would have, in some measure, reformed the world. Here, through the intuition of these youthful philosophers, was also the means of discovering new truths concerning the nature of God and the working of spiritual law. As Alcott contemplated the magnificent possibilities of these two aims, it is little wonder that he refused to be daunted by temporary failures. Ultimate defeat was unthinkable for a venture of such noble proportions.

Although Alcott had no illusions as to the popularity of such a program, he had an inward assurance that he was set apart, both by native capacity and by experience, for the

work of unfolding the spiritual to his day and generation. He resolved, therefore, to persevere in his decision to explore the intellectual and spiritual nature of man. "If I cannot gain more than material bread by so doing in the estimation of a material world, I can assuredly secure the attainment of that spiritual food which cometh from Heaven—and no one under such circumstances can hesitate, if he had the desire, which course to pursue—that which leads to outward accumulation, or to inward attainment." This decision, recorded in Alcott's Retrospect for 1832, was important. It made clear the path that Alcott would follow, without hesitation, for the next fifty years.

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CHAPTER V

THE TEMPLE SCHOOL

Not Wordsworth's genius, Pestalozzi's love,
The stream have sounded of clear infancy.
Baptismal waters from the Head above
These babes I foster daily are to me,
I dip my pitcher in these living springs
And draw, from depths below, sincerity;
Unsealed, mine eyes behold all outward things
Arrayed in splendors of divinity.

Alcott, Sonnets and Canzonets, XIV

WHEN Bronson Alcott returned to Boston in the fall of 1834, he was ready, by virtue of reading, study, and thought, to embark on a serious attempt to carry out in a school the ideas which had been formulated in his mind with increasing certainty. Always before, he had begun with a school, in more or less of an accepted pattern, and had made there certain changes in harmony with his intuitions as to the nature of man and of education. This time it was different. This time he would begin with the Idea, and a school should be created to exemplify it. Before, he had experimented, timidly here, boldly there, but now he was ready to risk all on a noble, far-reaching experiment in Christian education.

For, he reasoned, if man is really a child of God, why should not his education be such as to bring out the Godlike qualities in him? The main object of Bronson Alcott's Temple School, then, can be simply stated: He proposed to turn the mind of the child inward upon itself, that the child might gain a knowledge of the divinity in his inner being, and that he might learn to appeal to that inner principle as a guide to conduct.

In many respects, the time and place Alcott chose for his experiment—Boston, 1834—were as favorable as might be. Even Quaker Philadelphia Alcott had found to be too quietly prosperous, too grossly materialistic to countenance an experiment in spiritual education, but in Boston there was always soul-stirring revolt of some sort. Emerson has damned the earlier period of Massachusetts by saying that from 1790 to 1820 "there was not a book, a speech, a conversation, or a thought, in the State." In contrast to this, the years after 1830 were marked by such an influx of writers, thinkers, and talkers that there is a tendency to consider, as Parrington does, that the period was one of idealism, when, for a brief time, the intellectual and not the merchant dominated New England.

It is true, the 1830's saw a large traffic in ideas, but they saw a still larger volume of business done in land speculation, when everybody (women and boys included, it is said) bought and sold real estate bonds on credit. It was those same years that brought about the disastrous financial panic of 1837 and the intellectual panic of 1838 which followed Emerson's Divinity School Address.

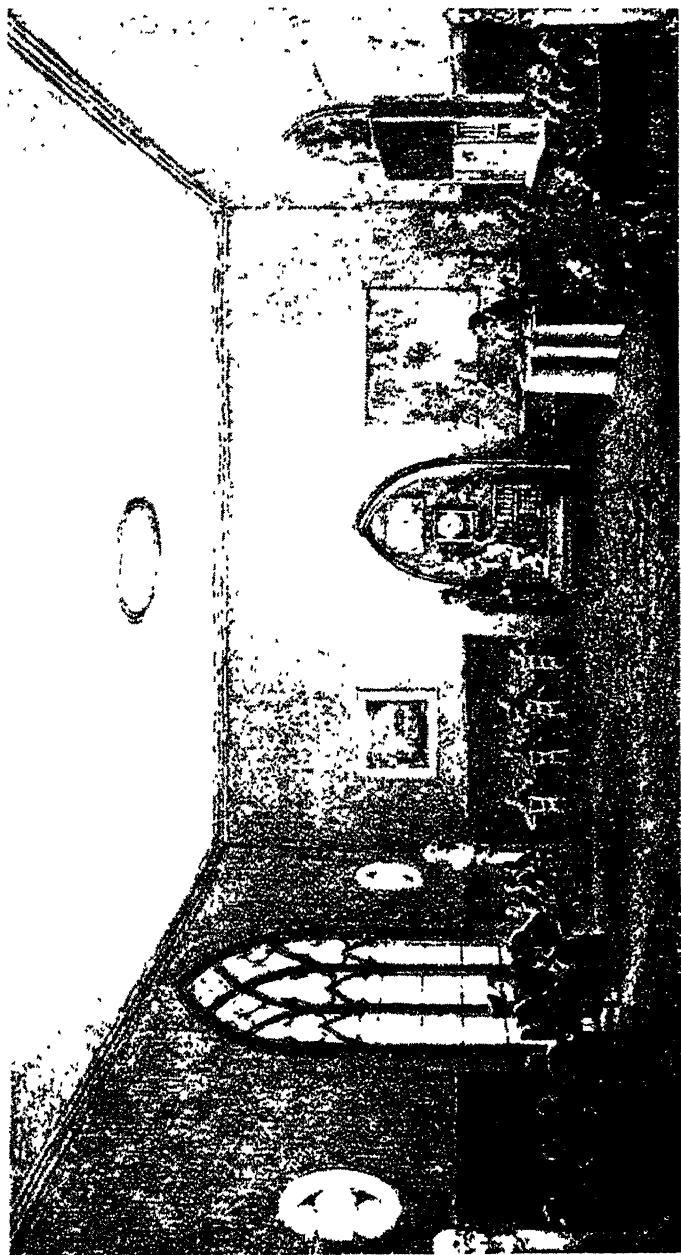
No time is ideal for revolutionary experiments, but Boston, 1834, was as good as any, and better than most. There was the Reverend W. E. Channing to give weight and respectability to Alcott's enterprise, and there was his friend Elizabeth Peabody. She had not forgotten that Alcott was the man, above all others she had known, who understood the way with a child. She remembered the magic of the Roxbury conversations, the thrill of discovering that both of them had chosen for their lodestar Wordsworth's great Ode:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

It was Elizabeth Peabody who did the preliminary work for the school, and an ideal person she was for the job. That same enthusiasm that would pull Nathaniel Hawthorne out of his long seclusion was just the thing to persuade people like Chief-Justice Lemuel Shaw, Josiah Phillips Quincy, James Savage, Patrick Jackson, Samuel Tuckerman, and George B. Emerson to place their children in Alcott's school. It would have been hard to find a group of parents who would give greater promise of intelligent cooperation in such an endeavor, for these men were active in most of the liberal causes of the day. Almost without exception, the children came from the upper social class, but they represented a variety of religious backgrounds. There were Unitarians, Calvinists, Baptists, Swedenborgians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Universalists, and even Free Enquirers. Alcott was delighted with this variety, and hoped to add a Quaker and a Catholic, that all creeds might be represented. He was delighted, too, that almost half the original group of pupils were girls, for their influence was very important in the experiment he proposed.

Alcott had always felt that pleasant surroundings were of the utmost importance in a school, and here, especially, he determined that the schoolroom should not be inferior in taste or decoration to the homes from which the children came. The room chosen was a large one in the Masonic Temple, and its chief feature was a large Gothic window. Individual desks were made to order by a cabinet maker and were placed around the wall, with individual blackboards to swing out when needed. The master's desk faced the window, and behind it was a cast of Christ in bas-relief. The statuary



THE TEMPLE SCHOOL, FROM A SKETCH BY FRANCIS GRAEIER

Reproduced from the *Record of a School*, 1896

was more than mere ornament; it became a functional part of the teaching. To Alcott, all material forms were but symbols of spiritual reality and the cast of Silence before the window served him well for illustration. Busts of Socrates, Milton, Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott ornamented the corners of the room. Alcott hoped that all that was seen, all that was done in that room would connote ideal beauty, thus bringing exterior circumstance into harmony with the spiritual serenity of childhood.

When the school began, Alcott devoted most of the first two months to preliminary training and discipline. He was quite clear as to the results he hoped to attain, but he knew, too, that perfection of government could not come at once. He began by discussing with the children why they came to school, and the general decision was that they came to learn right actions. They discussed together the question of discipline, and Alcott showed how it was a matter that concerned the whole group. For example, if one child were inattentive when Alcott was about to begin a story, then all had to wait and suffer for the fault of one. At first the novelty of being treated like rational beings made the children behave perfectly, but later, offenses began to occur. Alcott had planned to use no punishment as such, but he found that it took too long to reason out everything, so that punishment was used, provided its justice was agreed to by the group. The customary punishment was simply to exclude the child from the group. The most drastic case occurred when Alcott insisted that a child strike him. The boy did so, and burst into tears. Forty years later, two ministers debated publicly as to whether this was an instance of vicarious atonement.

In his emphasis upon the individual's relation to the group Alcott differed from other transcendentalists and lonely voices of his day. It was a doctrine of extreme individualism, this maintaining one's relation to the spiritual voices of the universe. The voices differed in their message

—some of them stammered a bit—but to the suggestion that perhaps their impulses came from below, not from above, most of these believers would answer with Emerson, “They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil’s child, I will live then from the Devil. No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature.” Alcott was striving with these children to awaken their consciences, to give them faith in their spiritual natures, but he was doing more than that. He wanted them to know themselves that they might be better *social beings*. Alcott’s school has been criticized in his own day and in ours for “excessive introspection,” but this emphasis upon group consideration constituted a strong antidote. Unlike some progressive schools of today, this school, while encouraging children to the fullest inner development and expression, required always that their actions be determined by reference to the group. Indeed, one of the most effective forms of punishment was to exclude a child from the conversations. Alcott had always felt that the punishment should fit the crime, and thus antisocial behavior was simply met by removal. It worked.

The strong social character of Alcott’s teaching might not be immediately apparent, for when the pupils entered in the morning, they went in silence to their desks and began individual work. Since words are perhaps the chief symbols of spirit, language study came first. The very little children sat at semicircular tables facing Alcott and marked on their slates, trying to copy letters, script, and finally, words. Thus, reading and writing, the training of eye and hand, went on at once. Bronson Alcott probably never heard the word “security” applied to elementary school children, but he had always known that children learned better when they were happy, and somehow he had always known how to make them feel secure and happy. A little five-year-old boy, who had a violent and obstreperous disposition, said to his mother one day, “Mother, if you die, I hope you will give

me to Mr. Alcott, for nobody in the world, besides you, except him, can make me good." Call it "moral health," as Alcott did; or call it "mental hygiene," if you prefer.

After the children had learned to read, spelling became the first lesson of the morning. Alcott chose Pike's spelling book because it contained the primitive words of the language, together with their derivatives. The children learned the spellings, looked up the meanings in their individual Johnson's Dictionaries, and then made up sentences using the words.

Meanwhile, the older students were busy at their journals. At first, they put down what Alcott considered "dry and uninteresting facts" but by and by more thoughts came to be mingled. His aim was to get the children to think vividly and consecutively and he was content to let the style follow after. For that reason he made no comment on mechanical details, feeling that that would interfere with the thought. Reading some of the diaries aloud occasionally served as stimulus to clear thinking and vivid expression. Intellectually, the journals served to integrate the work of the school, for here the children were expected to relate the common studies and conversations to their own peculiar needs and interests.

About ten o'clock the individual work was put aside and the school came together for spelling and defining. It was at this moment that the essentially social nature of Alcott's education became apparent. In a quiet voice Alcott would say that it was time for the older scholars, whose desks faced the wall, to turn around, but that it would take thought if they were to do it without noise or confusion. Then, still following this policy of preventing misconduct by forethought, Alcott would ask if anyone were going to want anything during the next hour. When everyone was satisfied, the lesson began, and strict attention was required of all.

The study of words, one of the favorite exercises, was carried on in Socratic fashion. Alcott would begin by asking for a definition of a word, say like "brute."

"It's a man who kills another," said one child.

"A man who beats his wife," or "a man who has no love," answered others.

But always a man, never a literal answer. Alcott tried the children a bit further. Referring to the illustration of a boy beating a dog, he asked, "Which is the brute, the boy, or the dog?"

"The boy," answered a little girl gravely.

This was not simply a vocabulary exercise, for always, the study of Spirit was involved. The pupils commented freely during these lessons, sometimes reflecting Alcott's idealism, and sometimes expressing a materialistic philosophy very unlike his.

Closely allied to the spelling and defining, both as language study and as character training, were the paraphrased readings, conversations, and grammar lessons. Maria Edgeworth's *Frank* was the favorite for the younger students and the *Commonplace Book of Poetry*, the *Bible*, and *Pilgrim's Progress* were used for the older ones. Alcott would first read or tell the story, paraphrasing to make the meaning clear, and questioning the children to draw out their thoughts. By his questions, Alcott encouraged the children to form in their minds concrete pictures of the scenes and actions being described. Sometimes the children wrote paraphrases for themselves. At other times, the procedure became that of analysis, classifying words according to their functions. All the children took part in this exercise, according to their ability. For the little ones, the scale was quite simple, comprising merely Persons, Things, and Actions; but it extended also to the discrimination of Objects, Actions, Qualities, Substitutes, and Relations for the older children.

For example, Alcott's *Record of a School* quotes the following analysis of *Pilgrim's Progress* from one child's journal:

So he commanded his man to light a candle, and bid Christian follow him: so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door, and Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall.

Objects	Actions	Qualities	Substitutes	Relations
wall	commanded	so	he	to
person	light	a	his	into
picture	bid	and	him	of
Christian	follow	so	he	against
door	had	a	him	up
man	hid	private	his	
room	open	and		
Christian	saw	the		
candle	hang	very		
man		grave		
		the		

I like this exercise very much and it teaches a great deal. After analysing this I wrote my journal of to-day. We had no recess to-day we were so much engaged in analysing that I beleive [sic] we entirely forgot the recess. I am sure I did.¹⁹

Though they memorized no grammatical terms, the children thus obtained a true knowledge of the functions of words. These conversations and analyses bore fruit not only in the self-expression in the Journals, but in the understanding and love of good literature.

Alcott also used to talk to the children about their own moral qualities. They talked a great deal about conscience, and about how one heard its voice, and about obedience, love, and faith. People were shocked at the idea of little children analyzing themselves, supposing it would produce

¹⁹ [Elizabeth P. Peabody], *Record of a School*, Second Edition, Boston and New York, 1896, 178.

egotism. However, in this school the ideal standard of Jesus always was implicit in the discussions, so that the general influence of the lessons was humbling to the conceited. There never was any separation here between mental and moral training, between character education and any other kind of education. Alcott felt that no activity of a child's life was apart from its character, and so he deliberately planned that exercises in his school should be valuable from both points of view. Self-analysis, biography, and journal writing, all bearing on the skillful use of language, were also vital parts of the character training as well. The work of this school was thus integrated, in the best sense of the word. No fact, no subject was taught as an end in itself; all the work contributed to the realities of social living in accord with the Christian ideal.

When it became apparent that this conversational method of teaching children was really successful, Elizabeth Peabody began to take down a record of the conversations. She had at first volunteered to teach Latin and geography that the boys might be prepared for the Boston Latin School, but now her enthusiasm for spiritual culture far outran her interest in these more prosaic subjects. Her transcripts were edited and published as the *Record of a School*, 1835. Alcott was anxious for the publication of the book in order that it might give greater circulation to his theories and hasten their adoption, but he was doubtful, too. He felt that Miss Peabody had represented him as well as anybody could, but the book was not exactly representative, since many conversations were reported only in part, and were not wholly intelligible. The reviews of the volume were fairly favorable, although the *Annals of Education* criticized it as "a mingled mass of truth and error—of useful, and useless, and in jurious principles and methods."

At this time Alcott had not met Emerson, although when he first lived in Boston he had heard him preach and had characterized the sermon as "a very respectable effort."

Emerson was not then the "sage of Concord"; he was just a comparatively young clergyman who had resigned his pulpit. He was thinking, though, and the results were to be an essay in which he would state that "Nature is the symbol of spirit." It was, therefore, with very real delight that he read the account of a school which aimed all the time to show the symbolical character of all things to the children. "It is remarkable," wrote Emerson in his Journal of July, 1835, "that all poets, orators, and philosophers have been those who could most sharply see and most happily present emblems, parables, figures. Good writing and brilliant conversation are perpetual allegories." It was that summer that George Bradford had told Emerson of Alcott, characterizing him as a consistent and practical spiritualist. And when Alcott went to spend an October Sunday with him, Emerson immediately put the man and the book together. He wrote (October 21, 1835) ". . . A wise man, simple, superior to display and drops the best thing as quietly as the least. Every man, he said, is a Revelation, and ought to write his Record, but few with the pen. His book is his school, in which he writes all his thoughts."

What part Alcott and his school played in the formulation of Emerson's theories is something that can never be "proven." It can, however, be pointed out that Bronson Alcott returned to Boston in 1834 with his transcendental philosophy quite well developed. His mind, large and absorbing, had included in its thought the parts of all systems and creeds that were attractive to him. Man's intuitive approach to God, he knew, whether he had learned it on the high hills of Wolcott with illimitable expanse in every direction, or whether he had learned it among the Carolina Friends. That nature is a type or symbol of spirit he might have learned from Plato, or from Emanuel Swedenborg, if he had needed to learn it. Perhaps the heart of the transcendental theory is that one of "correspondence" of natural facts and spiritual realities set forth by Swedenborg.

The Boston thinkers were much excited to discover a little book about Swedenborg, "The Growth of the Mind" by Sampson Reed. Alcott, though, had met prominent Swedenborgians on his first trip to Philadelphia in 1828. He knew those things. Self-reliance, too, he knew, in a spiritual way. He had found where his treasures lay, and he was a man who never quit his belief that "a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom."

And, in addition to believing these things, Alcott had the tremendous advantage of exemplifying them in his school. Here, before Emerson, was a man who was teaching children to act in accord with their spiritual natures, to consider nature as the symbol of spirit, to look upon words as symbols of spirit. At the very least, Bronson Alcott, his school, and his book must have been profoundly stimulating to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Not all readers understood Alcott so intuitively as Emerson, but the *Record* sold well enough that a second edition was decided upon. Some "people" (notably Dr. Channing) had complained that Miss Peabody's presentation of general principles was not clear, and so she rewrote that part of the book, incorporating the philosophy in a forty-three page preface to the second edition. A thousand pamphlet copies of this preface were struck off, January 23, 1836. Alcott was not at all sure of the effect. He knew well that a plan so novel and radical as his would not meet with "ready favor," that it would perhaps meet "sturdy and systematic opposition." However, his sanguine temperament overcame his apprehensions. "Let the thing take its course," he wrote. "I am not anxious. All will come right in the end." To one reviewer, Maria Sedgwick of the *Knickerbocker*, Miss Peabody's efforts to improve on Alcott suggested "the idea of a person endeavoring to render a dim glass clearer, by wiping it over with a wet cloth." In this second edition the poetry talked

about by Alcott and the children was inserted, and the arrangement of material was improved.

The *Record of a School* emphasized Alcott's conversational methods and they were made still more prominent when the two volumes of *Conversations with Children on the Gospels* were brought out in 1836 and 1837. By that time the public felt certain that the cultivation of Spirit by means of conversations was the only aim of the school. Miss Peabody's second *Preface*, however, does describe how other subjects were taught, and a glance at Alcott's "Plan of Study" shows the distribution of time.

Alcott believed in the study of science, though the youth of these children made it of secondary importance for them. Miss Peabody's class in geography developed in somewhat novel ways, however, for she used a literary and imaginative approach, as well as the scientific. The study of maps was supplemented by descriptions of mountains, lakes, and coasts, that the students might not think maps constituted reality. In studying oceans, Alcott and Miss Peabody used the accounts of the voyages of Columbus and other discoverers. Alcott wanted to find descriptions of all the shores of the sea, such as the beautiful one of the West Indies in Columbus' journal of his first voyage, but he could not find adequate material for this. Arithmetic and Latin, taught by Miss Peabody, completed the formal curriculum of the school.

One of the chief criticisms leveled against Alcott's school in this period of comparative popularity was that he cultivated the imagination of his scholars to an inordinate degree. The current theory was that the reading of fiction was weakening to the fibres of the mind. To the charge of cultivating imaginations, Alcott had to plead guilty, for he not only used fiction prominently (even in teaching geography) but it was fiction of a particularly fanciful kind—fables, parables, allegories, and poetry of the most ideal

QUARTER CARD OF DISCIPLINE AND STUDIES IN MR. ALCOTT'S SCHOOL FOR THE SPRING TERM CURRENT 1886.

THE TUITION AND DISCIPLINE ARE ADDRESSED IN DUE PROPORTION TO THE THREEFOLD NATURE OF CHILDHOOD

THE SPIRITUAL FACULTY.

MEANS OF ITS DIRECT CULTURE.

- 1 Listening to Sacred Readings
- 2 Conversations on the GOSPELS
- 3 Writing Journals
- 4 Self-Analysis and Self-Discipline
- 5 Listening to Readings from Works of Genius.
- 6 Motives to Study and Action
- 7 Government of the School

THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY

MEANS OF ITS DIRECT CULTURE.

- 1 Spelling and Reading
- 2 Writing and Sketching from Nature
- 3 Picturesque Geography
- 4 Writing Journals and Epistles
- 5 Illustrating Words
- 6 Listening to Readings
- 7 Conversations

THE RATIONAL FACULTY

MEANS OF ITS DIRECT CULTURE

- 1 Defining Words
- 2 Analyzing Speech
- 3 Self-Analysis
- 4 Arithmetic
- 5 Study of the HUMAN BODY
- 6 Reasonings on Conduct
- 7 Discipline

The Subjects of Study and Means of Discipline are disposed through the Week in the following general Order

TIME	SUNDAY.	MONDAY.	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY.	FRIDAY	SATURDAY.
IX	Sacred READINGS with Conversations	STUDYING Spelling & Defining and Writing in Journals	STUDYING Geography and Sketching Maps in Journals	STUDYING THE GOSPEL and Writing in Journals	STUDYING Parsing Lesson and Writing in Journals	PARAPHRASING Text of Readings and Writing in Journals	COMPLETING Account of Week's Studies in Journals
X	Listening to Services at CHURCH and Reading	SPELLING with Illustrative Conversations on the Meaning & Use of Words	RECITATIONS in Geography with Picturesque Readings and Conversations	READINGS and Conversations on SPIRIT as displayed in the Life of CHRIST	ANALYSING Speech Written and Vocal on Tablets with Illustrative Conversations	READINGS with Illustrative Conversations on the Sense of the Text	READINGS from Works of Genius with Applications and Conversations
XII	Reading BOOKS from School Library	STUDYING Arithmetic with Demonstrations in Journals	DRAWING FROM NATURE in Journals with Mr. Graeter	CONVERSATIONS on the HUMAN BODY and its Culture	COMPOSING Writing Epistles in Journals	STUDYING Arithmetic with Demonstrations in Journals	REVIEW of Journals Week's Conduct and Studies
I	or others						
III	STUDYING Latin and Writing in Journals	STUDYING Latin with Recitations	RECREATIONS and Duties At Home	STUDYING Latin with Recitations	STUDYING Latin and Writing in Journals	RECREATIONS and Duties At Home	RECREATIONS and Duties At Home
IV							



type. Miss Peabody made short work of such charges, pointing out rather curtly that "the decision does not lie with us, whether there shall be Imagination or not; or what degree there shall be." Imagination exists, like it or not, and, therefore, the thing to do is guide it away from the dominance of the senses and into the realms of ideal beauty.

Since Alcott was anxious that his theories should attain a wide reception, he was very happy to gain an important disciple to the "doctrines of spiritual culture." This was Hiram Fuller, proprietor of the Greene Street School in Providence. A long letter from Fuller to Alcott, preserved in the latter's Autobiography, shows the extent to which Alcott's methods were carried out in Fuller's school:

June 17, 1836

My dear Sir:

I regret exceedingly that I did not visit your school on my return from Plymouth. But unforeseen necessity prevented me. From all I heard and saw during the little while I was with you, from what I have seen and learned from those who have been your pupils, and from the 'Record,' I am constrained to feel and say that I have more sympathy with your philosophy of education and mode of instruction than with [those] of any other teacher with whom I am acquainted. Pardon me for saying *acquainted*, for from having almost daily read your thoughts, and commented upon them to my scholars during the last years, I think I know some thing of your philosophy, and how else do men become known to each other? Your name also is as familiar to my pupils as my own and occurs in this Journal almost as frequently. I have been in the habit of reading from the Record in the morning such things as may be considered sacred in association, as well as in themselves in order to prepare the minds of the scholars for prayer.

I am almost impatient for the work you are now preparing. I think it will greatly aid me in my duties as an instructor. The Record is always cordially listened to, and sometimes is even greeted with a clamorous welcome. Mr. Alcott's School is a familiar thing, indeed, I may say, it is the *beau ideal* of at least sixty young enthusiastic hearts in the city of Providence.

But the greatest aid I have derived from your book is through the influence it has with parents. This, though it may not have been anticipated, I think, you will be pleased to learn and is my principal apology for writing to you. Soon after I came to this city to open a school (February last) I purchased six copies of the Record and lent them to the parents of the scholars, and requested them to circulate them among their friends. They did so, and the result has been an excitement. I began with twenty scholars only. I have now about sixty-five. I must have a new building. Is it intruding too much to ask you to give your idea of a school room, for both sexes? And further, may [I] ask you to be [have?] one of your pupils make out a catalogue of the books in your School Library.

I am much pleased with "Krummacher's Parables." We are stimulated with the anticipation of seeing you at New Years.

I have written at recess, so the children wish to send their love to Mr. Alcott.

Yours in fraternal sympathy,
Hiram Fuller

When Miss Peabody left the school in the summer of 1836, Alcott hoped to persuade Fuller to be his assistant. But Fuller's school was too profitable and thriving to be left, and so Margaret Fuller assisted in the Temple School. By December, however, Hiram Fuller decided he would need an assistant and wrote to Alcott to inquire about Miss Fuller. Alcott, of course, recommended her highly, and she left the Temple School in December to rest before joining Hiram Fuller in his new building in the spring. Alcott, meanwhile, set about preparing a dedicatory address, "(should it be asked)".

Alcott was interested in all forms of education, and he saw in the Sunday School an opportunity for effecting great reform in teaching methods. Accordingly, his interest in this particular field had, if possible, increased since his earlier days in Boston. In October, 1835, he started a series of Sunday morning conversations on the Old Testament for the children of his school and their friends, paralleling the school

talks on the New Testament. These Sunday morning talks continued a year or more before they were given up for lack of attendance. A children's church had long been one of Alcott's favorite ideas, and he may have hoped that it would develop into an adult church as the children came to maturity under his guidance.

More far-reaching in effect than these conversations for children was a course for Sunday School teachers held on Friday nights, beginning November 18, 1836. The first topic for discussion was the life of Christ and the evidence by which faith in him is supported. The beginning was apparently auspicious in spite of the controversial subject. This was Alcott's favorite topic, and various ministers took part in the discussion. The Sunday School teachers chiefly listened. This seems to have been Alcott's first "conversation," to use the term in the technical sense which he and Margaret Fuller made famous, and he commented in his *Journal* (November 18, 1836), "We have proved that we can converse. I anticipate profit and usefulness from that attempt." The attendance continued to be good, and the conversation became increasingly spirited. At first subjects were presented fearlessly, but a narrow spirit began to be shown by the speakers and audience. It became the settled thing to look to Alcott to furnish the novelty, while the others as a matter of course defended the timeworn views. In order to keep the discussion going, Alcott had to bring out points of view he did not support. This led to misunderstanding and effectively prevented him from making any progress in the spreading of his own ideas. Channing expressed his distrust, a fact to make a man in Alcott's position pause and take thought of himself. Alcott was saddened by the news; but, assured by an authentic instinct that his belief was from heaven, he persevered. Finally the "conversations" degenerated into a monologue.

Alcott's Wednesday morning conversations on the gospels

of the *New Testament* became the best-known feature of his school for a time. Important visitors like Harriet Martineau came, and prominent Bostonians as well. Ralph Waldo Emerson visited the school on June 15, 1836, and listened with keen interest to the rather striking things said by the children on the Gospel of St. John. As he watched the gradual dawn of thought upon the minds of all, he felt strongly that "to truth there is no age or season. It appears, or it does not appear, and when the child perceives it, he is no more a child; age, sex, are nothing: we are all alike before the great whole." In this, as in other opinions of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the clergymen of Boston could not concur.

Elizabeth Peabody again made transcripts of these conversations, assisted at times by her sister Sophia and by Margaret Fuller. Alcott acted as his own editor this time and two volumes, *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, appeared in December, 1836, and in February, 1837. In his discussion of general principles, Alcott pointed out that education is the art of revealing to a man the true idea of his being and his endowments, and of fitting him to use these for the growth, renewal and perfection of his spirit. It is the art of completing a man. He felt that the study of the New Testament and the living word of Jesus was the best way to accomplish this. And so he had conducted his conversations with children on the theory that man, being a creation of God, could know him directly, and that children, having come but recently from their celestial origin, were the best witnesses of the true nature of God. The book was thus "a revelation of the Divinity in the soul of childhood." The character of Jesus was presented as the "brightest Symbol of Spirit," and the children's words became the testimony of their unspoiled natures to the purity of Jesus.

To the modern mind, these statements may look a little naive, but hardly dangerous or heretical. Underneath the extreme simplicity of the words, however, are three assump-

tions about man and his relation to God, which are contrary to the tenets of Calvinism. First, Alcott insisted that man can enjoy an original relation with his Creator, without the intermediacy of revealed religion or its expounders. Then, he asserted that all men were divine, in the sense that all partook of the nature of God. And third, while he set Jesus up as the ideal standard of perfection, Alcott denied his special divinity, and regarded him as a great and good man who realized to a high degree the possibilities for divinity inherent in all men. When Alcott's theological beliefs are stripped of their conversational covering, there is little wonder that the upholders of "revealed religion" considered him and his books immoral and dangerous.

Alcott himself was aware of these things, and did not expect the true value of the book to be perceived by his age, but he had no doubt of its intrinsic worth or of its eventual success. "Its appearance (this announcement I venture on my own sense) shall date a new era in the history of education, as well as a prophecy of the renovation of philosophy and of Christianity," he wrote. It is unfortunate that Alcott could not have been content with the revolutionizing of education, or of philosophy, or even of both, without encroaching upon the precincts of the theologians. But to him, there was no such thing as education without Spirit, which the theologians claimed as their province. Like Horace Mann, Alcott found that orthodox religion was one of the chief opposers of educational reform. This book was religious and heretical to the very core, and the orthodox made immediate and vociferous attack.

Elizabeth Peabody was first to get wind of the coming storm and she scurried and crawled to escape. The summer before the book was published, she discovered in talking to people that the reception would be unfavorable, and so, although she had recorded the conversations, she wrote to Alcott dictating certain stipulations that would place her in

the role of passive, irresponsible, even unsympathetic recorder. This letter hardly jibes with her public display of scrupulous honesty in the *Record of a School*, where she could not leave out a single unfavorable passage, even though she elsewhere pointed out that much was necessarily omitted. This was an odd quirk of character in Elizabeth Peabody, for both privately and publicly she expressed Alcott's peculiar doctrine of Christ, almost in his words. To Horace Mann, March 2, 1835, Elizabeth Peabody wrote, "I believe that Jesus spoke in the name of the human soul and that everything he said of himself we ought to be able to say of ourselves, even 'I and my father are one' and 'for this cause was I sanctified and sent into the world,' . . ." and the same idea was repeated in an article in the *Western Messenger*. Elizabeth Peabody's enthusiasms were so constant that Alcott could say of her after she had spent a day with him in 1879, "Dear lady, as enthusiastic as when I first knew her, about human culture." But at this particular moment her constancy failed her, and she wrote to Alcott this devious and dictatorial letter:

Worcester, August 7, 1836.

Dear Sir:

The very day after my letter to you I received a communication from a friend; by which I learn that much more extensive than either you or I were aware of is the discussion of such subjects as it is known were discussed in connection with the birth of Christ censured even by friends of your system and of yourself, and that something of an impression was gratuitously taken up that I left the School on that account—an impression for which I can in no ways account, except it was thought I ought to leave it. For I have been *very wary* what I said about it—generally leading off from the subject when it was mentioned, but turning attention upon your purity of association being so much like that of children. For I always wanted the plan to succeed in this particular of it especially, so sure I am that it is impossible to keep children ignorant and that it is better to lead their imaginations than to leave them to be directed by

idle curiosity. And yet I do not think I should ever have ventured so far myself. And a great many questions I thought were quite superfluous, and what was to be gained by them was not worth the risk of having them repeated and misunderstood abroad. A great deal is repeated, I find, and many persons, liking the school in every other respect, think it is decisive against putting female children to it especially.

I have told you this in the spirit of friendship, and hope you will not despise it. I am conscious of the effect of a few week's freedom from the excitement of being a part of the School, or taking down that exaggerated feeling which made every detail of it seem so very important to the great course of Spiritual Culture; and I never was under half the illusion in this respect that you were.

But with respect to the Record: whatever may be said of the wisdom of pursuing your plan as you have hitherto done in the school-room, where you always command the spirits of those around you (only subject to the risk of having your mere words repeated or misinterpreted) I feel more and more that these questionable parts ought not to go into the printed book, at least that they must be entirely disconnected with *me*.

In the first place, in all these conversations where I have spoken, I should like to have that part of the conversation omitted, so that it may be felt that I was entirely passive. And I would go a little farther: there is a remark of Josiah Quincy's about the formation of the body out of "*the naughtiness of other people*" which is very remarkable. Please to correct that in my record. But if you wish to retain it, you can add a note in the margin saying: 'the Recorder omitted Josiah's answer in this place, which was &c. &c.'—putting Josiah's answer in your own note.

There are many places where this might be done, and thus the whole responsibility rest upon you. I should like, too, to have the remarks I made on the Circumcision omitted. I do not wish to appear as an interlocutor in that conversation either. Besides this, I must desire you to put a preface of your own before mine, and express in it, in so many words, that on you rests all the responsibility of introducing the subjects, and that your Recorder did not entirely sympathize or agree with you with respect to the course taken, adding (for I have not the slightest objection), that this disagreement or want of sympathy

often prevented your views from being done full justice to, as she herself freely acknowledges. In this matter yourself also is concerned.

Why did prophets and apostles veil this subject in fables and emblems if there was not a reason for avoiding physiological inquiries &c? This is worth thinking of. However, you as a man can say anything, but I am a woman, and have feelings that I dare not distrust, however little I can *understand them* or give an account of them.

Yours, etc.

E. P. Peabody²⁰

Miss Peabody here alludes to the second reason why Boston was profoundly shocked by *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*. The book was indecent. These charges arose from a discussion of birth in connection with the birth of Jesus, and how souls assume bodily form. None of the children seemed to have any idea of the physical aspects of birth. Instead of "drawing a veil of silence," Alcott discussed the question very gently, emphasizing the joy of mothers over the birth of a child. In a passage omitted by Miss Peabody and restored by Alcott in the notes, he explained to the children that "when she [the mother] is going to have a child, she gives up her body to God, and he works upon it, in a mysterious way, and with her aid, brings forth the Child's Spirit in a little Body of its own, and when it has come, she is blissful." It happened that this particular passage was recorded by Sophia Peabody, who, as Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne, firmly established herself as a judge of indelicacy and indecency. Sophia wrote to Alcott, saying that she had felt her own mind elevated by the conversations, and could not imagine that they would not be received with reverence and thanks. Boston, however, preferred "the purity of ignorance," and the newspapers attacked the books as heretical and indecent.

The publication of the first volume had been the signal

²⁰ Shepard, *Pedlar's Progress*, 187-189

for smiles in some quarters, sneers in others; but with the appearance of the second, the flood of abuse broke all bounds. Alcott sent review copies of the books to Nathan Hale, editor of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, to find out the reaction of that part of the community he represented. Hale's review, March 21, 1837, left Alcott in no doubt, for Hale considered it a duty to enlighten his readers concerning a system, "not of instruction, but of amusement, which could hardly fail of producing mischievous effects." The essence of this system, as Hale conceived it, was "to select the most solemn of all subjects—the fundamental truths of religion as recorded in the gospels of our Saviour— . . . to invite the pupils to express, without discrimination or reserve, all their crude and undigested thoughts upon it—and especially upon those points which are most difficult to be understood, and not excepting those upon which inquisitiveness is useless, and often improper and mischievous." Hale quoted liberally from the *Conversations* in support of his opinions.

Much as Alcott and his friends resented the matter and tone of Hale's article, it was urbane in comparison with the remarks which followed in the *Boston Courier*, March 29, written by "A Parent" with appended suggestions from the editor, J. T. Buckingham. The parent combined in his discussion Sylvester Graham's *Lecture to Young Men on Chastity* with Bronson Alcott's *Conversations on the Gospels*. He considered that if, on the one hand, the *Lecture* would diffuse its poison through the whole moral constitution of society, the *Conversations with Children* would, on the other, as surely sap the religious sentiment of the community to the foundation. The parent could think of no contrivance more effectual than Alcott's for bringing the Scriptures into contempt, and suggested that nothing short of alienation of mind could have led any man into the idea of making *children* the interpreters of the Scriptures, the

study of which has, for ages past, employed "the profoundest and maturest minds."

The editor, who confessed that he had but partially read the book, had room only to compare Alcott with Abner Kneeland, who had recently been indicted for blasphemy by the grand jury, and to inquire if the Honorable Judge of the Municipal Court had examined the *Conversations*. If not, the editor would lend him his copy with pleasure.

Public opinion was fanned to such a pitch by these articles and others of a similar tone, that a mob was threatened. The association of Alcott's name with Graham's may have contributed to this idea, since on March 2 a mob had gathered to prevent Graham's lecturing to married ladies only. The plan was to attack at Alcott's Friday evening conversation with Sunday School teachers, but some forewarning was received and the meeting was cancelled. The censure of friends and opprobrium of foes was borne by Alcott in unbroken silence, "the only course, which as a man of honor and dignity," he could pursue. Should someone speak in his defense, he would thank him for the deed; should none speak, then he would rest his appeal on the silent testimony of his life. "Truth will declare itself in the end, though prejudice and error hide it for a time," he wrote in his April Journal.

Defenders were not lacking, however. As soon as Emerson, with whom Alcott had become acquainted in 1835, saw Hale's attack, he went to Boston to see the editor, but was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Emerson wrote Alcott an exceedingly cordial letter in which he characterized the attackers in the famous phrase, "I hate to have all the little dogs barking at you, for you have something better to do than attend to them, . . ."²¹ Emerson followed this letter with one to Joseph Buckingham, editor of the *Courier*, pro-

²¹ Ralph L. Rusk, Editor, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York, 1939, II, 61 f.

testing against "dragging [passages] out of the protection of philosophy and religion which hedged them round," and criticizing them out of their context. His one plea was "Let the book be read." Buckingham commended the "truly Christian temper and amiable dispositions of the writer," and inserted the letter in the April 5 issue of the *Courier*. It was signed simply "R". It did not serve, however, to alter the editor's opinion of the schoolmaster who had adopted "so singular a plan of *instruction*."

The Unitarian papers, whose dogmas were not at stake, at first contented themselves with judicious criticism, but their attitude became one of defense as the attacks grew more opprobrious. Even before the attack of Nathan Hale brought public sentiment to a head, the *Christian Register* commented, on March 4, that "perhaps no book has ever been treated more unjustly, and uncharitably in a Christian community." The leading article in the *Christian Register* of April 29, 1837, written by "a frequent spectator," was devoted to Alcott's defense. Like Emerson, the author protested against unfair extraction of passages, and suggested that books be read before they were reviewed. Though admitting indiscretions occasioned by the "angelic simplicity" of Alcott's mind, the reviewer gave a very fair estimate of the educational effect of Alcott's school. In the editorial column of the same issue was printed a letter from James Freeman Clarke sending ahead an extract from the *Western Messenger*, since it might arrive too late to be of use if it were first published in the May number of that magazine. Clarke felt that the book had been "hastily judged and prematurely condemned." On reexamining the *Conversations* in the light of objections, he did not find that they justified at all the severe censure passed on the book, whereas its extraordinary merits seemed entirely overlooked.

Bronson's cousin, William, or Dr. Alcott, was one of the few people who commended Alcott's mention of birth.

He, too, was a pioneer in "moral education," though he was particularly interested in that part now called sex education. He published *The Young Wife* in 1837, *The Young Husband* a year later, and was so revolutionary as to wish to give to parents and teachers a knowledge of the physiological nature of man, and the result of every form of licentiousness upon it. He felt that Graham's *Lecture to Young Men*, which Boston had found so objectionable, answered part of the need for greater information. Dr. Alcott therefore commended in the September *Annals of Education* both Graham's book and Bronson Alcott's *Conversations*, although he was careful to disclaim any sympathy with the religious opinions expressed in the latter. He did, nevertheless, applaud an attempt to perfect and adorn the animal nature that it might be rendered a more fit temple for the indwelling Holy Spirit. William Alcott's commendation was, however, a doubtful boon to one in Bronson Alcott's position. At the time the *Courier* was attacking Bronson so vigorously, a person signing himself "Eliot" wrote a note to the paper, April 6, 1837, distinguishing the two men of the same surname. The editorial comment was: "It is *not* strange that many people should confound these two authors; for it is rather strange that there should be, in one city, two humbugs of the same name."

But what effect did all this controversy have upon the Temple School itself? In the fall of 1836, the enrollment of the school was lower than it had been during the preceding two years, and in January, 1837, there were but twenty-five pupils. By the selective process of three years, the patrons were the most intelligent of any time, but even they did not estimate the school at what Alcott considered its true value. At a meeting held in January to discuss what measures should be taken, the patrons suggested that Alcott should advertise. He, however, shrewdly commented that advertisements and circulars would do him little good. "A

man must come to me in faith, and against popular sentiment; he must come from a previous insight into the difficulties of my art." As a last resort, however, Alcott did insert an advertisement in the *Christian Register*.

Alcott was tremendously pleased by a letter from the Hon. James Savage, which, he said, was about the first evidence of parental and non-professional sympathy he had had. In the letter, written January 29, 1837, at the instigation of Chief-Justice Lemuel Shaw, Mr. Savage suggested no practical methods of saving the school, but the long letter was entirely sympathetic, and expressed great confidence in Alcott's work. Judge Shaw was more practical in his letter, which also expressed approbation. He concluded:

In regard to the future prospects of your school, I entertain a strong hope, that by giving a little more practical character to your system and course of instruction, and without renouncing any of the peculiar characteristics of your own system, and by giving it a little more notoriety in the modes usually adopted for that purpose, you will be able to keep up and even increase your numbers.

In response to an inquiry asking if his patrons thought the tuition price could be raised from \$15 to \$25 a quarter, Alcott received some interesting letters. Some thought it would be detrimental, others not; but all testified to their satisfaction with Alcott's care of their children. It is significant, however, that several parents explained that they would remove their child at the beginning of the summer, for they thought he was now old enough for closer application to studies. Of his child, John Ware said, "I have been sensible to a very distinct improvement in him both in learning and behavior since he has been with you, and should regret very much that he should at present be transferred to another teacher. . . ." John Henshaw spoke of the way the mind of his son Andrew had been disciplined and developed by Alcott's instruction, while Charles Morgan of New Bedford,

whose son Charles had been a boarding pupil in the Alcott home, wrote a fine letter thanking the Alcotts for bringing out the fine qualities of his son as he himself had not been able to do. The most charming letter, however, even in the formality of the third person, is that from Mrs. Josiah Quincy, Jr.:

Mrs. Quincy, Jr. presents her best acknowledgements to Mr. Alcott for his polite attention in sending "The Conversations," and his beautiful "Essay on Human Culture."

She has read both with the highest interest and would express a grateful sense of many aids in her maternal duties which Mr. Alcott's example and teachings have furnished. The moral training goes on steadily at home, which it is hoped may, by the blessing of God, prepare the young immortal for the various experiences of this stage of being.

Josiah bears testimony to the idea of disinterested regard for his moral good in his teacher, by a most feeling assent whenever he is reminded on any serious delinquency—how Mr. Alcott would be grieved were he to hear Josiah had been false to his Conscience.

With much regard and best wishes for Mr. Alcott's success in his most elevated vocation. Mr. Quincy adds his thanks for this particular kindness to his little pupil.

Saturday

February 19, [1837].

1 Hamilton Place.

So sure was Alcott of the worth of his experiment, that he entertained a secret hope that his patrons would subsidize him. Many of them, however, had severe financial troubles of their own in the spring of 1837. Since he could not stave off his creditors with expressions of confidence, Alcott was obliged to sell his fine school furniture in April, 1837, during the panic. The furniture, busts, casts, globes, the bookcase with a hundred and fifty volumes and as many more from his own library all went under the auctioneer's hammer. Many of the books were of fine calf bindings and were English editions. Alcott particularly hated to lose a

five volume set of Taylor's Plato, but the elasticity of his mind is shown by the remark that his chief consolation was in having made himself so familiar with their spirit, that he would not miss them much.

Alcott considered giving up his school, for "drilling a few children" seemed somewhat a waste of valuable time, yet he realized it would be better for his theories if he could point to scholars as concrete examples. He therefore opened for the summer term of 1837 in a small room in the Temple, convinced of his failure to gauge correctly the public temper, but not doubting the adequacy of his theories. Concerning the new situation, Alcott wrote in his Journal for May, 1837:

I love beauty. I feel enriched and honored by its presence, but I can yet dispense with it. It costs me some feeling nevertheless. My little room, with my 10 pupils, and some of the remnants of my former more magnificent mansion, with which it is a great contrast, gives me unquiet reflections. But these soon disappear with the presence of worthy and just estimates of my true position as a man and a teacher. I feel honored by the manner in which these have been yielded, and see in the sacrifice, the story that belongs to simple intentions and pure deeds.

In the midst of his own troubles, Alcott could still commend Hiram Fuller's success. He felt a paternal interest in the school, since his own genius was more visibly at work in it than in any other institution. He had been obliged to forego the pleasure of delivering the opening address at the dedication ceremonies, June 10, 1837, for fear of injuring the enterprise. Emerson, therefore, dedicated the little Doric Temple, furnished somewhat like Alcott's Temple School. In his speech, parts of which are incorporated in the essay on "Education," Emerson stressed the necessity of emancipating man from his bondage to things, to fortunes, to institutions, and of conspiring with Divine Providence to place trust in the higher faculties. Emerson brought back

news that saddened Alcott, for Fuller seemed to be so practical a man as almost to be a devotee of "Mammon." He explained to Emerson just what he would do—keep school five years, income so much, outlay so much, go to Europe, etc. Alcott could not understand it. He had always spent the greater part of his income in his schools, and to have the leading disciple of spiritual culture think in these terms was too much. Emerson recorded Alcott's chagrin:

For Alcott holds the school in so high regard that he would scorn to exchange it for the presidency of the United States. The school is his Europe, and this is a just example of the true rule of Choice of Pursuit. You may do nothing to get money which is not worth your doing on its own account. This is the sense of "He that serves at the altar shall live by it." Every vocation is an altar.²²

Miss Fuller left the school in December, 1838, expressing doubts about its continuance under Mr. Fuller. By this time, Alcott was certain that his confidence had been misplaced, and mournfully commented, "There is now no institution for spiritual culture amongst us."

In these days of need, however, and of dubious dependence on the good will of friends, never had Alcott been more busy, never had he written more pages. While the outward world seemed cold, cheerless, while the sun shed its beams under frowning cloud, Alcott had basked in calm, serene sunshine. He had "meditated, written, lived, in some sort, to soul." Alcott's attitude was in part that of escape; he was calm in the face of attack because the unpleasantness was scarcely real to him. He retreated into the "reality" of spirit. Yet it would be unfair to characterize Alcott as an escapist. His school was re-opened, and there was never a moment's hesitation about continuing the propagation of the doctrines of spiritual culture. Realizing that his method of

²² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*, Boston and New York, IV (November 6, 1837), 348.

attack must be changed, Alcott marked time until new openings should appear. After the Alcotts moved to No. 6 Beach Street in June, 1838, the school was kept there for a year until it closed permanently, June 22, 1839. Though Alcott had in mind to continue this little school only until something better turned up, the issue was forced (as he doubtless intended it to be) by his acceptance of a colored child into his group. Even though the abolitionist movement was comparatively strong in Boston, the majority of citizens were violently opposed to such activity. In this case, the prevailing temper of the city was shown as the patrons, through Dr. John Flint, urged the dismissal of the colored child from the school. When Alcott declined to comply with the suggestion, the indignant parents removed their children. Finally there remained but five children—Alcott's own three daughters, a child of William Russell, and the negress. Though he no longer pretended to keep a school after June, 1839, Alcott continued to instruct the colored girl along with his own children and those of William Russell during the following year.

Meanwhile, Alcott and Emerson differed as to the mode of procedure. To Emerson, Alcott was the visible incarnation of spirit, and Emerson was insistent in urging Alcott into the purely speculative life. Writing to Alcott in May, 1837, Emerson suggested:

In the few minutes broken conversation I had with you a fortnight ago, it seems to me you did not acquiesce at all in what is always my golden view for you, as for all men to whom God has given "the vision & the faculty divine," namely, that one day you would leave the impracticable world to wag its own way, & sit apart & write your oracles for its behoof. Write, let them hear or let them forbear—the written word abides until slowly & unexpectedly and in widely sundered places, it has created its own church; and my love & confidence in that *silent* muse is such, that in circumstances in which I can easily conceive myself placed, I should prefer some manual or quite

mechanical labor as a means of living that should leave me a few sacred hours in the twenty four, to any attempts to realize my idea in any existing forms called intellectual or spiritual, where, by defying every settled usage in society, I should be sure to sour my own temper ²³

Alcott, however, commented that his friend sympathized more intently in his speculative than in his practical genius. Alcott wished to give his powers "fit exercise in each of these modes of action." To act on his age seemed an irrepressible instinct of his nature. "I desire to see my Idea not only a *written*, but a *spoken* and an *acted* Word—a word INCARNATE," Alcott wrote, May, 1837.

One evening, while taking a walk before going to bed, Alcott had a "revel vision" of himself as a traveling missionary of culture. He would go forth into the villages and gather people together, as families, circles of young people, audiences in halls where he could talk with them, or give formal lectures. He would visit schools, give demonstration lessons, enter into the pulpit on Sunday (if invited), and preach the gospel of life. In such simple manner he could sow seed over the land, quicken and stir his age. He would converse, lecture, preach, and keep a journal of these doings. At the close, the journal could be published, as insight into the current state of culture. This would give opportunity for him to say almost all he wanted on the doctrines of the soul.

The idea of this missionary enterprise caught Alcott's imagination until he felt an almost irresistible sense of duty commanding him to close his school and sally forth on this noble errand. Here, instinctively, he had stumbled onto the thing that fit his talents. He had always liked peddling. He liked seeing different places, and he liked meeting people. He especially liked families and children. Now he had an idea, one that the world should hear. Why should he not

²³ Rusk, *Emerson Letters*, II, 75.

peddle it? Mrs. Alcott and other friends were horrified. The dignified Bronson Alcott going about like a common peddler! It was ridiculous. Bronson Alcott had to wait ten years before he was to start on the missionary journeys to the West, where his visits did awake widening circles of active thought, as he had dreamed here. But at last he knew what he had to do.

This closing of the Temple School ended one period of Alcott's life. Never again was he in active charge of a school of little children. That was forbidden to him. He saw then that he must aim at parents, and he made a reconsecration of his efforts. With the text, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not apprehend the doctrines and disciplines of the soul," Alcott entered on his ministry. With zeal and optimism he looked forward to his new mode of action: "I teach adults and win them back into the kingdom wherein the Child liveth; and thus secure their interest in the great end of culture. This is my hope."

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CHAPTER VI

SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Yet now am I visibly idle My hand is without service. The age
hath no work for me I stand with folded arms, desirous of doing
some service for soul, but the age hath nothing of that sort on hand
Alcott Journals, November 29, 1837

"BOSTON or Brattle Street Christianity is a compound of force," wrote Emerson, "or the best Diagonal line that can be drawn between Jesus Christ and Abbott Lawrence." With all his heart, Bronson Alcott had labored in the spirit of Jesus Christ; and, like the prophets of old, he had preached his gospel to all who would listen. He had taught children in schools, and in Sunday Schools; he had instructed parents and teachers in meetings. Magazine articles, pamphlets, books stood as witnesses of the assiduous labors by which he hoped to free the example and spirit of Jesus from the corruption of sects and churches. Though Boston Christianity, both lay and ministerial, had no desire to adopt the gospel of Christ, pure and undefiled, there was no element of compromise in Bronson Alcott's nature, and he persisted in his teaching. Boston had evolved a religious life which supplemented, even bolstered, its social and business interests. With this eminently satisfactory situation, so shrewdly depicted by Emerson, no prophetic schoolmaster could be allowed to interfere. To eliminate this menace, however, was a comparatively simple matter. Public opinion, easily manipulated by the press, and by conversational innuendoes or open ridicule, operated so that Bronson Alcott, who, a few years be-

fore, had been the proprietor of the most popular school in the city, was left "visibly idle."

Alcott's apparent idleness, unfortunately, appeared as culpable in the eyes of commercial Boston as had his theological teaching and writing to the Calvinists. The followers of Abbott Lawrence had no respect for an unemployed schoolmaster with a philosophical bent. Though salvation by works was no part of the Calvinist code, economic necessity had sanctified work, and had assured it of an important place in the hierarchy of virtues. The man who did not work was looked upon with open suspicion and distrust. Timothy Dwight, remarking that Boston was distinguished by its habits of business, wrote, "A man, who is not believed to follow some useful business, can scarcely acquire, or retain, even a decent reputation." Since Alcott's reputation could scarcely be described as "decent," and since the profession of philosopher, the only one remaining to Alcott after the failure of his school, was not established as a "useful business" in Boston, from this time forward, Alcott was a man suspect. Rejected alike by the parties at either pole, by the men of God as well as by those typified in Abbott Lawrence, and himself rejecting the compromise represented by Emerson's Diagonal, Alcott found himself in a world which had no apparent place for him.

This rejection was a far more serious matter to Alcott than the mere loss of his livelihood, though that was serious enough for man with a wife and three children to support. This went deeper. He had dedicated his life to the service of his fellow-men, and now that they had rejected him, what was there left? What was there to live for? Many men live and work apparently that they and their families may eat, but not Bronson Alcott. So complete had been his dedication to the "service of soul," that to deprive him of the opportunity to "work upon his age" was to him like the loss of food would be to another man. It struck at the very core

of his being. This was the struggle Alcott faced almost daily for five years and more; it was the struggle that was never wholly resolved to the end of his days.

A man struggling for his very life will try many means to save himself. There were advances and retreats on both fronts, psychological and physical. Since the world had rejected Alcott, his first and very natural reaction was to retreat more completely into spirit and to say to the world, "I will have none of you." He rejected the "vulgar aims" of his times, and prayed fervently for strength:

Save me, O ye destinies, from idleness, from tame and servile engagements, from compliance with the vulgar aims and pursuits of my age! Lift me above its low maxims, and make me a light shining amidst darkness!

So shall my year be one of blessing and reward.²⁴

At other times he was cheerful, patient, content to bide his time. In 1837 he wrote:

Thus, day by day, amidst this hour of small profit in the actual, do I live. Circumstances, age, do not favor such work as I have to do. Only, or chiefly, do I live in Idea. I order my life before mine own eyes and those of my household, but the age will not employ me. I am an Idea without hands. I find no body for my thought amidst the materials of this age. It denies me timber. What shall I do but content myself with my lot, and await in patience the hour when the age shall give work for my faculties and honor my art, supplying materials therefor—when souls shall be proffered instead of bodies, and I shall practice my art on these, moulding them into figures of beauty by wise discipline?²⁵

But the tradesmen had no such patience. They clamored to be paid. And so, a compromise was reached. The Alcotts decided, in 1840, to move to Concord, where Alcott might support his family by manual labor, and where he in turn

²⁴ Shepard, Editor, *Alcott Journals*, 96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

might be sustained by the presence of his friend Emerson. This union of "*labor and culture*" delighted W. E. Channing:

Mr. Alcott hiring himself out for day labor, and at the same time living in a region of high thought, is perhaps the most interesting object in our Commonwealth. I do not care much for Orpheus in the "Dial,"—his flights there amuse rather than edify me,—but Orpheus at the plough is after my own heart. There he teaches a grand lesson,—more than most of us teach by the pen.²⁶

The spectacle, however, was more attractive to the eminent Divine from his position of comfortable security, than it was to the little family whose very existence depended upon the success of the venture. Alcott labored with outward good will, but with a divided mind; hands upon the plow, indeed, but spirit in the clouds. Such labor was unsatisfying and unrewarding both to Alcott and to his employers.

Few people appreciated the fact that life itself, not bread and butter, was at stake in this matter. Let it be said to the everlasting credit of Abba Alcott that she did know. She had none of her husband's patience to sustain her, and it was she who had to produce some sort of food three times a day, she who faced the tradesmen, she who sold her wedding presents, but she knew. At the time of the decision to move to Concord, March 13, 1840, she wrote to her brother, S. J. May:

It is a low state of moral discrimination which will give the man an honorable discharge who has been twenty years gambling in fancy stocks, but drives into the regions of starvation an exalted spirit whose desires and efforts for twenty of the best years of his life, has been to elevate and improve the moral and intellectual condition of mankind. I try not to believe it, but the cruel sacrifices we are daily called to make, compels me to

²⁶ Elizabeth P. Peabody, *Reminiscences of Rev William Ellery Channing*, Boston, 1880, 414.

despair of better things yet awhile. Can Mr. Alcott have time to work out his problem, we may yet hide our faces and strike our breasts for shame at our incredulity. I say *ours*, for I have been among the sceptical, and he still thinks me almost impotent in faith. But his patient endurance often staggers one, and the undaunted manner with which he assumes his labors and cares, giving up with cheerful submission those things which I know are dear to his heart and lovely to his eye, for the rigors of toil and privation, fills me with admiration. There is no sighing or complaining, but silent bowing to the dispensations of injustice and ignorance, where he had reasonably expected intelligent cooperation and loving patience. Let us, my dear brother, sustain him. This is my resolution. May you not falter even though heart sometime fail you. Depend upon it, there is a reality here, which does not show itself all on the surface. There is a depth from which rare and living water wells up at times to refresh thirsty souls, supplied from the Source of all life and light.²⁷

And two years later, while her husband was in England, Mrs. Alcott recorded in her own diary: "It is your life has been more to me than your doctrine or theories. I love your fidelity to the pursuit of truth, your careless notice of principalities and powers, and vigilant concern for those who, like yourself, have toiled for the light of truth."²⁸ Before wholly condemning Bronson Alcott as "a poor provider," we should at least do as his wife did—take him on his own terms. There he was never found wanting.

In the midst of Alcott's greatest discouragement there came from James Pierrepont Greaves in England a long and intimate letter asking many details about Alcott's school, including twenty-two aphorisms on education for Alcott to ponder over, and suggesting that Mr. Greaves would be glad to come to America if Alcott did not think they could become sufficiently acquainted by correspondence. Alcott was somewhat amazed to receive such a letter from a person of

²⁷ Alcott, *Autobiography*, 1834. Also quoted, with literary "improvements," in Morrow, *The Father of Little Women*, 205 f

²⁸ Shepard, Editor, *Alcott Journals*, 144 f

whom he had not heard, but he was reassured to discover that this was the gentleman to whom Pestalozzi's *Letters on Early Education* had been addressed. It developed that Harriet Martineau had visited Alcott's school in the hey-day of its success, and, though she disapproved violently of what she saw there, she had taken the *Record of a School* back to England and had given it to Mr. Greaves, who was prominent in many reforms. Greaves recognized a kindred spirit and wrote at once to the "American Pestalozzi."

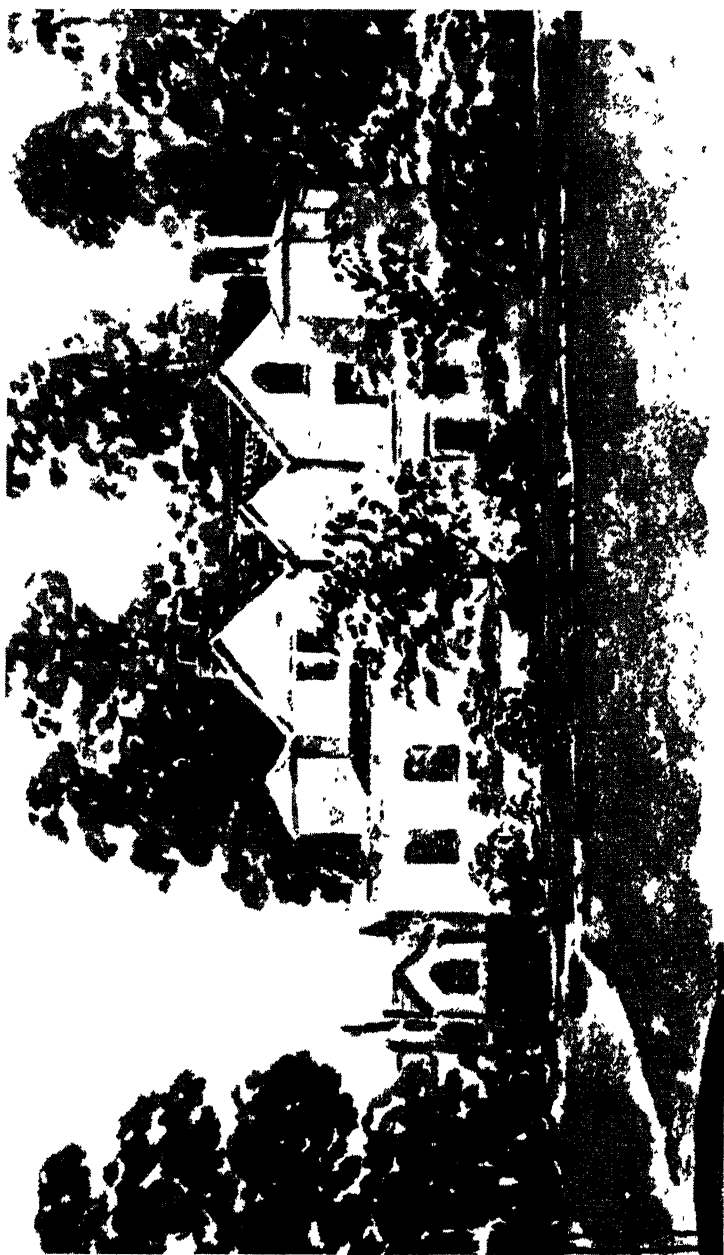
Since the situation of his school was so precarious, Alcott hesitated before answering Greaves' letter. The request for books was embarrassing, for the printer had title to the books and refused to give them up, but copies of the *Conversations* were finally sent. In return, Greaves sent Alcott several books including his own *Three Hundred Maxims for the Consideration of Parents*, in relation to the education of their Children. John A. Heraud wrote, and sent copies of his *New Monthly Magazine*, in which he had reviewed Alcott's work. Included in the reviews was one of Emerson's *Nature*, which he attributed to Alcott. Alcott was so interested in these men that Emerson wrote to his friend Carlyle to inquire what Heraud was like. Carlyle's reply, written April 1, 1840, immortalized the poor fellow as "a loquacious, scribacious little man, of middle age, of par-boiled greasy aspect, whom Leigh Hunt describes as 'waver-ing in the most astonishing manner between being Something and Nothing.'" Insisting that his portrait of this "cheerfulest best-natured little creature extant" was no caricature, Carlyle closed his description by quoting John Stuart Mill, "I forgive him freely for interpreting the Universe, now when I find he cannot pronounce the *h's*!" In spite of this astonishing introduction, however, Emerson, in his "English Reformers," had fair words of praise for Heraud and his periodical. Emerson particularly approved of Heraud's faithful efforts to do justice to Behmen and Sweden-

borg, and described him as a "fluent and popular lecturer on the affirmative philosophy."

As the secretary of the Infant School Society, James P. Greaves was in touch with many reform movements, and had gathered about him a circle of people, now forgotten, but rather well known in their day. Greaves founded an Aesthetic Society which included the journalist Heraud, his co-editor Francis Foster Barham, John Westland Marston, dramatist, John Goodwin Barmby, reformer, Mrs. Wheeler, the heterodox mother-in-law of Bulwer Lytton, and Dr. Henry Longueville Mansell, later Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. When the leader of such a group offered to Alcott not only praise and fellowship, but the deference due to a master, it was spiritual meat and drink to the starved soul of the man who had been cast aside by his contemporaries. Emerson noticed the effect of the foreign praise, commenting in his journal: "Alcott seems to need a pure success. If the men and women whose opinion is fame could see him as he is and could express heartily as these English correspondents their joy in his genius, I think his genius would be exalted and relieved of some spots, with which a sense of injustice and loneliness has shaded it." ²⁹

Emerson looked at Alcott differently from anyone else. Alcott was so completely the exemplification of Emerson's theories that it was a little breath-taking. Of course, he was lop-sided, or had "a slight deviation from the Centre," in the Emersonian phrase. Emerson himself had balance—he kept one foot, or both feet, planted solidly on the ground while his mind soared. But Alcott scorned such moorings and delighted to follow his spirit on its travels. Emerson must have felt responsible for Alcott in a subtle way. It was as though the ruling power of the universe had said, "You speak of Man Thinking. Here he is; try him out." It would have been ungrateful not to have accepted the gift. Alcott had no idea

²⁹ Emerson, *Journals*, V, 322.



ALCOLI HOUSE, HAM COMMON, SURREY, ENGLAND

of ever going to England; it was hard to manage the price of a ticket to Boston. One can imagine his feelings when, in the winter of 1842, there came a letter from Emerson in Providence saying that he thought Alcott ought to spend the summer in England, and that it would give him great pleasure to be responsible for the necessary amount of money. It was a magnificent offer, for Emerson was not a rich man. To Alcott, the devotion of his friend was a reward as great as that of the trip.

Mrs. Alcott was none too happy at the prospect. She perhaps realized that the radical English transcendentalists had contributed to her husband's blindness to all claims but those of spirit, and she dreaded the lonely responsibility of caring for four children. Junius Alcott, Bronson's younger brother, was sent for to come and help look after the family, and Bronson set sail in May, 1842. He was stoutly fortified by ten sovereigns in his red pocketbook, a bill of exchange for twenty pounds, an armload of good books, some home-made bread, a basket of apples, and a heart full of joyous anticipation. The voyage was a pleasant one, and though Alcott spent a little time in London, he was not interested in "sights," and made his way quickly to Ham Common, Richmond, in Surrey.

Here, his reception left little to be desired. He was distressed to learn that Mr. Greaves had died in March. His death had left the group without a leader, and so they were somewhat disposed to look to Alcott in that capacity. The main building had been called Alcott House by Greaves, and here Alcott found Charles Lane, a former business man, William Oldham, who managed the business affairs, and Henry Gardiner Wright, who taught the school. Numerous projects were afloat at Alcott House in addition to the school. There, in 1841, had been opened the first Hydro-pathic Institution in England; and from there, too, was published Charles Lane's magazine, *The Healthian*, based

on the doctrines of Pythagoras. A list of the Ham Tracts, reprinted from the *New Moral World*, England, 1840-41, indicates the type of enterprise in which the occupants of Alcott House were interested: *Fidelity and Infidelity; Necessity, Fatalism, and Freedom; Universal Philosophy; The Sabbath Day and Sabbath Being; The Old, the New Old, and the New; Tone in Speech, and Unity in Society.*

Alcott found Greaves' stamp on the entire institution—his words on every tongue. His disciples considered him superlative in every respect. Charles Lane called him "a gigantic mind, bestriding the narrow world of literature like a colossus," and Francis Barham insisted he was "essentially superior to Coleridge." Greaves had been born in 1777, and had been educated for business. He carried on a business in London until it failed in 1806. Later, Greaves joined Pestalozzi at Yverdun, where he remained four years. Neither he nor Pestalozzi ever learned the other's language, and their intercourse was described as "magnetic." Later, Greaves taught English at the Universities of Basle and Tübingen, but his ideas did not please the authorities and, Charles Lane tells us, "the man of peace and love was advised to withdraw to some more accepting sphere." He was a strict Pythagorean and lived abstemiously on fruits, nuts, vegetables, and cold water. One of the last acts of his life had been to found the Alcott House School.

It is not so much the events of Greaves' life as his ideas that are important to a study of Alcott. He seems to have been a thoroughgoing transcendentalist. His intuitive mind abominated all reference to authorities, and all other things were subordinated to the knowledge that he had a divine mission to perform—"Spiritualism in Word and Deed." One particular point of dogma Greaves continually emphasized was the supremacy of *being* over knowing and doing. He wanted to train children to turn from matter to spirit, and then from spirit (individual) to spirit (uni-

versal). He felt that the human being possessed universal as well as individual faculties, and that the education of the universal moral faculties should be developed in harmony with the laws which connect man with his maker. Alcott could embrace all that has been said, as descriptive of his own beliefs and practice. But Greaves carried the matter one step further. He wrote, "As Being is before knowing and doing, I affirm that education can never repair the defects of Birth."

This was a very different matter. If Greaves were right, not only could the schoolmaster not hope to remake the world, but even the infant schools were too late a place to try. Most reforms begin with adults, but Alcott had always felt that that was the wrong end. He had begun with young children, and had turned to adults reluctantly when the children were taken away from him. Now, however, he accepted the new belief. It gave some sanction to his work with adults.

In the Alcott House School Alcott had, for the first time, the experience of seeing his own educational principles carried out by other hands than his own. Henry Gardiner Wright, in charge of the school, Alcott declared to have "more genius for teaching" than any person he had yet seen. He wrote to Dr. Alcott, "He impersonates and realizes my own Idea of an Educator, and is the first person whom I have met that has entered into this divine art of inspiring the human clay and moulding it into the stature and image of divinity." In the school there were about thirty children ranging from three to twelve years of age. The regime was very strict. Morning lessons were preceded by bathing and exercises and the food consisted of plain bread, fruit, vegetables, and cold water.

The school bore various marks of Alcott's influence, notably the elimination of rewards and punishments, and the use of diaries. The prospectus of 1839 sounds most like

Alcott in its emphasis upon self-analysis as the leading study of the school.

While the school thus did bear certain imprints of Alcott's influence, it nevertheless was meant to exemplify certain other principles, more radical than any hitherto proposed by Bronson Alcott. According to Charles Lane, the world had already had two dispensations; first, the *family*, and second, the *nation*, to which must be added as the third, the *universal*. Love, "the One Generator," was the force which was to bring about this universal dispensation. "Love" was a technical term which Greaves used as synonymous with God, Life, or Spirit. The vastness of the ideas being discussed made exactness difficult and so exactness was dispensed with. When a word failed in meaning they gave it new meaning. "For a word is a Proteus that means to a man what the man is."

No wonder that those who proposed to ameliorate being by the "marriage of spirit-selected pairs" were laughed at as crack-brained fools. One would like to be able to say that Alcott disregarded such nonsense. But the truth is that he managed to surpass even his English friends in a dogmatic disregard for actualities. A magazine was being projected, and both Heraud and Barham deemed Carlyle's name and interest essential to its success with the public. With a blissful disregard of such practicalities, Alcott would put the work on its own merits, proposing that it should answer to something like this: "*The Janus, an Ephemeris of the Permanent in Religion, Philosophy, Science, Art, and Letters.*" This idea was "obviously too broad and daring" for "the apostates" (Morgan, Biber, Heraud, Oldham, Smith, Marston), and the disciples of Love separated, "after a stormful day."

In these divisions of opinion it was Charles Lane and Henry Wright who sided with Alcott, and it was they who accompanied him to America, there to found the community

from which might stem the regeneration of all society. It would be pleasant to record that Alcott was led by the vagaries of his English companions to enter upon the visionary scheme known as Fruitlands. The best one can say, however, is that Lane and Wright provided a fertile medium for the growth of Alcott's developing radicalism. Alcott was riding the crest of the wave: no longer was he the despised failure, the prophet crying in the wilderness; he had two disciples, one of them had money, and the time for triumph had arrived. Carlyle saw in Alcott's "more than prophetic egotism," such material of which sect-founders, and all manner of cross-grained fanatical monstrosities have fashioned themselves. As Carlyle had failed to see in Alcott "his pure and noble intellect," Emerson feared (and rightly) that it lay "under some new and denser clouds."

The "pure success" which Emerson had hoped would remove some of the "spots" in Alcott's character had quite the opposite effect. It turned his head a little, understandably, but regrettably. Two important consequences stand out as a result of this visit to England. One was Alcott's acceptance of Greaves' idea of the importance of Being, that birth, not education, was primary in reform. The other was the decision to found in New England a colony where these principles might be carried out. This was characteristic of Alcott, for, as has been seen, he never adopted principles without acting in accordance with them. If the world was not to be reformed by education, then there was no time to be lost in starting a project which was likely to have better results.

Alcott returned to America in October of 1842, bringing with him Charles Lane and his son William, and Henry Gardiner Wright, as a nucleus for the proposed colony. Meanwhile, all lived at the Cottage in Concord until plans were made. The order of the day was very strict and Henry Wright soon left. Mrs. Alcott, too, found the atmosphere harsh and repressing, but she could not leave. She had at first

been cooperative and had looked at possible farms even before her husband's return, but she soon found her home transformed almost beyond recognition. The intimate story of the Fruitlands venture (June to December, 1843) has no place in a study of Alcott as an educator, but its consequences cannot be neglected in any discussion of this period of his life.

Fruitlands has been ridiculed as the most visionary scheme of all those that hoped to turn the nineteenth century into the dawn of a new era. In a sense, perhaps, it was, for it was doomed to practical failure before it began—the view of Mt. Wachusett was superb, but the land was poor. In another respect, however, Fruitlands is the most interesting of all the colonies, for it was a serious attempt to translate a philosophy into life. Placing their trust not in improved circumstances which should meliorate the condition of man, but in superior men who would generate a better social state, Alcott and his associates attempted so to order their lives and circumstances that the nobler qualities might predominate over the baser ones. Hence, property and money were eliminated so far as possible in order to withdraw from a government which countenanced the keeping of human beings in bondage. Ownership was avoided by having Emerson act as trustee. Simplicity of diet, plain garments, pure bathing, and clean dwellings were desired as conducive to gentle behavior, kindly sympathies, and serene minds. So as to avoid the subjugation of either man or cattle, the use of animal products and animal labor were avoided. Cattle should not be driven beyond "pleasurable exertion," thought the philosophers, nor should man be forced to act as cook and chambermaid to them three parts of the year. It was further felt that the eating of animal food tended to carnalize the spirit. Outward abstinence was therefore valued as a sign of inward fullness. Fruitlands differed radically from the

contemporaneous community of Brook Farm in that it aimed to produce, not an earthly Utopia, but a new sense of Heaven in the soul of man. Its hope of reform was individual and personal, not communal and circumstantial.

Though the progenitors of the Fruitlands community entered into the new life with hopeful enthusiasm, the practical living conditions never were sufficiently satisfactory to aid the life of the spirit. The fallow land was none too rich, and since it was June before the little group moved to the farm, planting was late, and the barren ground brought forth a scanty harvest. Fruit with grain and vegetables from the garden was to form the diet, but a few ancient apple trees were all the fruit on the farm. After short periods of heavy labor ordinarily performed by animals, the philosophers found it convenient to go off on trips about the state to confer with prospective converts. Far too much of the work devolved upon Mrs. Alcott, who was the only woman in the group for much of the time. Though Charles Lane charged her with knowing nothing of "spiritual ties," he did have to admit that "to keep all together she does and would go through a good deal of exterior and interior toil."

As winter approached, both Charles Lane and Mrs. Alcott knew that things could not continue as they were, and each recognized in the other an antagonist who would destroy what the other stood for. Mrs. Alcott represented Family, and Charles Lane, Spirit. The founders of Alcott House had from the beginning considered marriage a bar to the true cultivation of spirit. Along with government, the pulpit, and the press, Charles Lane openly wished to abolish the family:

Everything about me, both within doors and without, convinces me more and more that the individual family life must soon cease. Common sense, economy and good feeling must put an end to the separation of man from man which only the

grossest selfishness could tolerate for one hour, especially in a country where human action is so free as here it is.⁸⁰

The claims of spiritual culture, represented by Charles Lane—and those of family, typified by Mrs. Alcott, became resolved into the two poles of conflicting forces; between these mighty opposites stood Bronson Alcott. Compromise became impossible.

It was the same old conflict, and this time the issues were so clear-cut, that there could be no dodging them. He was faced with the choice between his duties as husband and father, and the possibility of becoming the regenerator of mankind. He had long attempted to serve both gods, placing the claims of spiritual culture first, and those of family second. Lane deemed Alcott "rather wayward and notional than wicked or acquisitive, and more borne down by his wife and family than wishful to abandon any affirmation he may make." "Poor fellow," wrote Lane, "between his cherished idiosyncrasies and his secular or social difficulties, his high moral principles have a sad time of it. In my further connexion with him be assured I shall try to help the latter to a larger expansion, and to contract the two former as much as I can." With full knowledge of all that his choice implied, Bronson Alcott decided for Family. All his life he had looked upon the family as the agency through which social betterment would be secured, and though this belief had been temporarily obscured, in the crucial test he realized that here was the reality to which he must cling. Thus was the nineteenth century spared a convert to the motley crew of prophets, messiahs, and sect-founders, whose careers, variously pathetic, sublime, absurd, perverted, even criminal, are a part of its annals.

Alcott made his decision, but the rest was not easy. For ten years the claims of spirit had been meat and drink

⁸⁰ Charles Lane to William Oldham, quoted in William Harry Harland, "Bronson Alcott's English Friends," not published, 57.

to him. Now there was no food. The statement is more than a metaphor. For weeks it was a question as to whether he would live, and then, slowly, he came back. Although Emerson had known from the first that Fruitlands could not succeed, he appreciated, too, what was happening to his friend:

Very sad, indeed, it was to see this half-god driven to the wall, reproaching men, and hesitating whether he should not reproach the gods. The world was not, on trial, a possible element for him to live in. A lover of law had tried whether law could be kept in this world, and all things answered, No. He had entertained the thought of leaving it, and going where freedom and an element could be found. And if he should be found tomorrow at the roadside, it would be the act of the world. We pleaded guilty to perceiving the inconvenience and the inequality of property, and he said, "I will not be a convict." Very tedious and prosing and egotistical and narrow he is, but a profound insight, a Power, a majestic man, looking easily along the centuries to explore *his contemporaries*, with a painful sense of being an orphan and a hermit here. I feel his statement to be partial and to have fatal omissions, but I think I shall never attempt to set him right any more. It is not for me to answer him: though I feel the limitations and exaggeration of his picture, and the wearisome personalities. His statement proves too much: it is *reductio ad absurdum*. But I was quite ashamed to have just revised and printed last week the old paper denying the existence of tragedy, when this modern Prometheus was in the heat of his quarrel with the gods.³¹

When Alcott prepared to earn his living after recovering from his breakdown, he thought first of all of teaching and applied for the primary school across the road from Emerson's home. Had he forgotten the charges of indecency against his Temple School? Did he not know what Concord would think of a man who went off to found a radical colony? He could not teach their children. The cut was deep. In the anguish of his decision to return to the world, Alcott

³¹ Emerson, *Journals*, VI, 503 ff.

had not considered that the world might not accept him. He wrote:

. . . Are there, then, no avenues open to the sympathies of my townspeople? O God! wilt thou permit me to be useful to my fellowmen? Suffer me to use my gifts for my neighbors' children, if not for themselves, and thus bless the coming, if not the present, generation. How long, O Lord! how long wilt thou try me, by this exclusion from the active duties of Church and State, and more than these, from the discharge of my duties to my neighbors, and my neighbors' children? To what ostracism does the frank declaration of his opinion sometimes drive a candid and thoughtful man! Yet far better this than to tamper with principles and their God. Even the little primary school was denied me,—but my own children are still within reach of my influences; for which, and bread for their mouths, and raiment and shelter for their bodies, thou hast put it into the heart of some to spare me from begging these necessities. Blessed be poverty, if it make me rich in gratitude and thankfulness and a temper that rails at none! But forgive me for intimating so much in spoken words.⁸²

Bronson Alcott had always considered schools makeshifts, substitutes to take over part of the natural responsibilities of parents, and he always deemed them successful in so far as they approximated the loving affections of the ideal family. Always consistent in the major claims of life, Bronson Alcott had never shirked this portion of his duty. In this lay perhaps his one shining success, for even today his children, in the fictional yet real portrayal of Louisa's *Little Women* and *Little Men*, stand as the exemplification of the ideal home training.

Both father and mother cooperated in the education of the Alcott children, although both agreed that his temperament—serene and cheerful—was better suited to the government of children than was her more tempestuous and ardent one. Consequently, from early infancy much of the

⁸² Sanborn, *A. Bronson Alcott*, II, 389 f.

care of the children was assumed by the father. The family arose at dawn, the children were bathed, dressed, and walked or had lessons with their father before he proceeded to his day's occupation. One of Louisa's earliest recollections was that of playing with books in her father's study, "—building houses and bridges of the big dictionaries and diaries, looking at pictures, pretending to read, and scribbling on blank pages whenever pen or pencil could be found."

Lessons in the study followed the play days. The alphabet was dramatized by the tall father standing stiff and straight for I, arms and legs spread out for X, or bent into odd curves for the goose, S, accompanied by a delightful hissing sound. By the time they were four, the children could mark well enough to begin printing tiny journals. In addition to many books appropriate to the reading skill of the children, there was always the reading hour, the "pleasantest of the day," according to Louisa, when "Pilgrim's Progress," Krummacher's "Parables," Miss Edgeworth, and the best of the old fairy tales were read with her father's peculiar skill. Their mother saw to it that the girls became expert at house-keeping and needlework.

While Charles Lane and his son were a part of the Alcott household at Concord and at Fruitlands, there was a definite attempt to systematize the studies of the children. They rose at six in winter (dawn in summer), bathed in cold water, and gathered about the fireplace for breakfast. Conversation of a "useful and interior kind" was cultivated, probably to take their minds off the breakfast of potatoes, apples, and cold water, and afterward there was a singing lesson. Anna and Louisa both loved this time of day. "It seemed so pleasant to sing with my sisters," wrote Anna; and Louisa's characteristically vigorous comment was, "I love cold water." Then each occupied himself with his own duties until time for school: Lane at his writing; Alcott sawing wood, baking, or experimenting with various new foods; and

Mrs. Alcott and the children at domestic tasks. At ten the children went to their father for reading, spelling, arithmetic, conversation, and diaries. In the afternoon the older ones went to Lane for French, Latin, Geography, and Geometry. Later, they sewed with their mother.

Some days the children's diaries read "No lessons today," for their father was often busy or out of town. That only meant that education of a different (and the Alcotts rather thought more important) kind was going on. Alcott remembered what it had meant to him to grow up in the country and he wanted his daughters to have that same indefinable sense of joy that comes with being in beautiful country. He wanted them to feel free, not cabined, or confined. And if there were no lessons on a certain day, perhaps that was one on which the mother might train her daughters in practical charity by encouraging them to give away part of their meal to a needy neighbor.

The Alcott family was not made up of two adults and four children; it was a unit, and the children were included both in the pleasures and in the problems. Who would not trade a year of school for the privilege of sitting quietly by in the study while Bronson Alcott and Emerson talked? Louisa's Journals mirror vividly what it was like to be Bronson Alcott's daughter:

September 1st— . . . Father asked us what was God's noblest work. Anna said *men*, but I said *babies*. Men are often bad; babies never are. We had a long talk, and I felt better after it, and *cleared up*.

Thursday, 11th—Mr. Parker Pillsbury came, and we talked about the poor slaves. I had a music lesson with Miss P. I hate her, she is so fussy. I ran in the wind and played be a horse, and had a lovely time in the woods with Anna and Lizzie. We were fairies, and made gowns and paper wings. I "fied" the highest of all. In the evening they talked about travelling.

December 10th—I did my lessons, and walked in the afternoon. Father read to us in dear Pilgrim's Progress. Mr. L. was in

Boston, and we were glad. In the eve father and mother and Anna and I had a long talk. I was very unhappy, and we all cried. Anna and I cried in bed, and I prayed God to keep us all together.³³

The Alcotts often used to write notes to each other. It was a good way to say the kind intimate things that are not always said aloud. One of Anna's letters to her mother shows how the philosophic conversations became part of the life of the children:

For
Dearest mother
fruitlands.

Dear Mother.

I wish that you would come to the table again. I enjoy my meals much better when you are at the table. Was not "Heraclitus" that father read about to-day, a dear good man, it seems as though I wanted to hug him up and kiss him. I wish men had understood his thoughts better than they did he would have been happier I think. I have enjoyed this morning readings and conversations better than I have before for a good while, I suppose, because I talked and I understood it so well. I do not write to you very often dear mother but I love to dearly when I feel like it, and I love to have letters from you. I have not been as good as I wish I had this week. I send a little bunch of flowers to you they are not very pretty but they are beautifully made and I thought you would like them. I had a beautiful time walking this morning with Louisa. Good bye dearest mother from your loving

Anna.³⁴

The Alcott children wrote regularly and freely in their diaries, which were always open to their parents, and the children were always delighted when either their father or

³³ Ednah D. Cheney, *Louisa May Alcott, Her Life, Letters, and Journals*, Boston, 1889, 35 f.

³⁴ Jessie Bonstelle and Marian de Forest, *Little Women Letters from the House of Alcott*, Boston, 1914, 101 f.

mother wrote a special word for them. Louisa fairly worshipped her mother, who sometimes heartened her daughter with a note like this:

Dear Louisa:

I sometimes stray about the house and take a peep into the journal. Your pages lately are blank. I am sure your life has many fine passages well worth recording, and to me they are always precious. Any thing like intellectual progress in my children seems to compensate for much disappointment and perplexity in my own life. Do write a little each day, dear, if but a line, to show me how bravely you begin the battle, how patiently you wait for the rewards sure to come when the victory is nobly won.

Ever yrs.

Mother ³⁵

Louisa always needed and received help in curbing her violent temper, but Elizabeth, the third daughter, needed encouragement of another sort. In this letter Alcott combines a subtle bit of suggestion along with his appreciation:

Concord Cottage

February 2nd, 1842.

My dear Elizabeth,

You give me much pleasure by your still, quiet manners, and your desire to do things, without asking impatiently and selfishly for others to help you without trying first to help yourself. Trying is doing; doing is but trying; try then always and you will do; and every one loves to help those who try. I will print a little sentence for you in large letters and you who have already found it so easy to do things for yourself will, I dare say, remember it, and follow it too—This is it—

TRY FIRST: AND
THEN ASK: AND
TRY PATIENTLY TILL
YOU HAVE TRIED
YOUR BEST: AND
YOU WILL NOT NEED
TO ASK AT ALL.

³⁵ Jessie Bonstelle and Marian de Forest, *Little Women Letters from the House of Alcott*, Boston, 1914, 101 f.

Trying is the only
Schoolmaster
whose
Scholars
always
Succeed.

Your Father.

Cottage, Feb. 2nd.⁸⁶

Alcott's daughters were too young to attend even his Temple School regularly, and they spent very little time in schools other than his. At Still River, where they moved from Fruitlands, they attended the district schools for a few months and in Concord a short time was spent under the instruction of Miss Ford and of Miss Anna Russell. Sometimes the girls used to regret not going to school with other children, but in a family of four there was hardly time to be lonesome.

Alcott, too, sometimes reproached himself for the desultory nature of his children's education, but in later years perhaps nothing gave him more satisfaction than his four talented, useful daughters. If they had taken their education where they found it—in their father's study, with their mother in the kitchen, out in the fields with Henry Thoreau who was like a big brother to them, entertaining a fugitive slave at their own table, at least they were not likely to leave it behind when they shut the door of a schoolroom. They had accumulated no credits, but they were intelligent, thoughtful, socially-poised young women, each with a special talent. All contemporary accounts mention Anna's dramatic ability, but it is also evident that the sweet evenness of her disposition and her domestic education fitted her admirably for her career as wife and mother. Elizabeth, who died in 1858, was the musician of the family, and Abba May, the youngest, became a rather well-known artist.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 94 f.

To Bronson Alcott's education must go much of the credit for Louisa's success as a writer. She had been trained to express her thoughts on paper ever since she could hold a pen. To the Alcott children books were not something to be learned out of, they were a vital part of life itself. They were to be read aloud in the family group, to be talked about, to be acted out. Even the making of books was not strange to the Alcott girls. Everybody they knew wrote books. Further, Alcott had always delighted his children with fanciful little fables made up on the spot. Louisa's story, "Transcendental Wild Oats," so widely quoted in all accounts of Fruitlands, is quite in the vein of the fables she had always heard her father tell.

Alcott always was more interested in character than he was in outward success, and here, too, he had reason to be proud of his daughters. Their essential goodness was shown in continual devotion and self-sacrifice for each other and for their parents. In a day when many young ladies were being educated only for the parlor, the Alcott girls kept school, went into service, and did sewing, proudly and gladly. They were generous and uncomplaining as well as courageous and self-reliant. The spiritual qualities of the father and the practical graces of the mother formed a harmonious combination in these daughters who reflected the intense moral earnestness, the innate refinement and the liberality of the family atmosphere in which they had been reared. Out of Bronson Alcott's deepest tragedy, then, came his greatest joy. It was a genuine distinction to be the father of the most famous family in America.

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CHAPTER VII

MISSIONARY OF CULTURE

It is easy to see that any extravagance of idealism may become matter of fact in the future, that whatever the imagination of man may conceive, the reason delegated to the hand of man may practically realize.

Alcott, *Table-Talk*.

ONE of the blessings of a long life is that often, in old age, there are realized dreams that in youth seem impossible of achievement. In Bronson Alcott's long span of eighty-nine years, the world caught up with the visionary young school-master of Cheshire if not with the idealist of the Temple School, and he was privileged to see in practice many of the principles for which he had struggled. But in the years immediately following Fruitlands there was no hint of future acceptance.

"What can I do for which men will pay me?" That, in Henry Thoreau's blunt phrase, was the question which Bronson Alcott asked himself. He could not compete with the Irish in cradling grain, nor had his earlier education fitted him for a clerkship. His well-known lack of practical qualities made any sort of business connection impossible. Though he had a true missionary spirit, his unorthodox beliefs precluded his representing a religious association in any paid capacity. There was just one thing which this man was fitted, by nature, training, and desire, to do, and that was to teach. But teaching, by an inexorable decree of society, was not then open to Bronson Alcott.

The true temper of the age toward Alcott is best illustrated by the attitude displayed when the Teachers Institute,

under the supervision of Horace Mann, met at the Concord Court House for a ten-day session in March, 1847. Alcott eagerly offered to give the hundred or so teachers in attendance the benefit of his experience as an educator, but since his political views were thought to be hostile to the State, the "Secretary of Education" refused to introduce him to the teachers. Alcott attended the meetings, however, and found many people who expressed interest in the principles and methods he had evolved. He was gratified to find better methods of teaching recommended and displayed, but was very much disappointed in the institute as a whole. It was superficial, he felt, and had little reference to fundamental principles. Such temporary aims, surely, could not produce men for public and private business on the grand scale, and were scarcely worth the efforts they cost. Alcott was still thinking in terms of the English theory of the regeneration of the individual, and was still distrustful of social institutions. He wrote, "The Reform in this, as in all things else, must begin in individuals, and be first demonstrated in private Enterprises before aid can be obtained to support any public institutions."

Horace Mann and Bronson Alcott, contemporaries in educational reforms, make an interesting contrast. They had just one thing in common—a Puritanical moral earnestness concerning the improvement of education. With that, however, the likeness ceased; their personalities, habits of thought, and modes of action were mutually exclusive. Mann's work was done chiefly as an administrator, and his reforms on a large scale were directed toward the improvement of the educational system. Alcott, of course, had little interest in systems and directed all his efforts toward individuals. Where Bronson Alcott would stop for philosophical theorizing, Horace Mann would be on and doing. His writings show little speculative inclination, and phrenology satisfied him as a system of thought. To attain his good ends,

the practical Mann would compromise, as he did in changing his religion to accept the presidency of Antioch College, justifying his means by the end. Mann was interested in results, Alcott in principles. Alcott admitted that temporary benefits grew from Mann's work, but he could be interested only in the permanent regeneration of mankind. For this there could be no compromise. Each man looked at the other with suspicion. To the idealist, the man of action was a temporizer; to the practical man, the philosopher was a fool. Today there are school buildings for the one; a few slender volumes and an "idealistic" biography for the other. Probably both would be pleased.

Though Alcott found it almost impossible to earn a living, there was no difficulty about keeping busy. The four years in Concord, 1844-1848, were industriously spent in gardening, landscaping the terrace behind the house, in reading, writing, and in walks and talks with Emerson, Thoreau, and Ellery Channing. The "*Biographie Universelle de soi même*," as Ellery Channing cleverly termed the Journals, took much of Alcott's time. Emerson described him in 1848, "[Alcott] sits here and plots an invasion of Cambridge Library, which, he says, has never been reported. He proposes to Thoreau to go down and spend a fortnight there, and lay it open to the day."³⁷

In 1848 the Alcotts moved to Boston where Mrs. Alcott and the girls might have better opportunities for work, and Alcott was once again near libraries and reform movements. During these years spent in Boston, 1848-1857, either Anna or Louisa usually had a small school in the parlor of the home. These schools gave Alcott some direct contact with children, although he had to be content with visits and inconspicuous assistance. Though they brought feelings of mingled pleasure and pain, Alcott found these visits to the school very refreshing. The minds of the children, unlike

³⁷ Emerson, *Journals*, VII, 535.

those of adults, glided so easily from the visible to the invisible world, "like the Angels they behold the Face of the Eternal Verities, and ascend without effort into the Divine Presence, disdaining the tardy steps of Reason." Alcott never quite lost the feeling that he, not another, should be teaching the children.

In his attempt to earn a living, Alcott offered himself to the Abolition Society to go about the country as their agent and speak on the cause of freedom, but even they declined his services. Henry Thoreau was particularly annoyed at this, and characterized them as employing only small men. Emerson, too, became very much aroused over Alcott's plight, judging it a bitter satire on the social order when this most advanced soul was doomed to die because he could not earn money "by his pen or his talk, or by school-keeping or book-keeping or editing or any kind of meanness." "We do not adjudge him to hemlock, or to garroting,—we are much too hypocritical for that,—but we not the less surely doom him, by refusing to protect against this doom, or combine to save him, and to set him on employments fit for him and salutary to the State, or to the Senate of fine Souls, which is the heart of the state." ³⁸

Gradually, as a man will, Alcott found his way of action. Aside from teaching, the thing he could do best, the thing he liked to do best, was to talk. People seemed to enjoy listening to him; might they be willing to pay for that privilege? Lecturing was well-established in Boston and conversations were not new, though it was an innovation to try to earn one's living in that fashion. Ten years of ostracism had taught Alcott a little caution, and so he began his conversations very tentatively, first in the villages of Hingham and Lexington in a circle of sympathetic friends. He no longer expected to remake the world through his own efforts. He still hoped for improvement, still was anxious to do his

³⁸ Emerson, *Journals*, VIII, 363.

share in bringing it about, but he realized at last that all such things arrive by a process of gradual growth and development.

Alcott had long before had a vision of himself as a traveling missionary of culture, and now, little by little, it was coming true. One of the best features of these conversations, to Alcott's mind, was that they took place in the informality of family life. A friend would ask him to converse at his house, and acquaintances would be invited in. When all were gathered, Alcott would begin to talk. Others would join in as they desired, and the interplay of ideas was often more thought-provoking than a lecture. To Alcott a conversation was a "sharing of views" and he never indulged in any sort of polemics. When people tried to argue with him, he simply took refuge in silence. As the conversations gradually proved successful, there was a yearly series in Boston, and then came trips, first in New England, and after 1855, throughout the Middle West.

Just as Alcott's earlier conversations with children on the gospels had been most successful when he had not prepared them in advance, so now he made no special preparation, except perhaps to take a long walk beforehand, or to read a few pages from one of his favorite authors. Of course, this was dangerous. Sometimes, the conversations were prosy and dull; other times they were miracles of inspired utterance. It made a difference, too, who was in the audience. His philosophy was best adapted to the young and ingenuous. Mature minds, whose opinions and prejudices were deeply rooted, were much more likely to offer opposition than they were to give sympathetic stimulation.

Alcott's experience in New Haven in the spring of 1857 is typical of the way in which he aroused suspicion in one group, and inspired another. There, a friend arranged a course of conversations whose titles included Friendship, Fate, Genesis, Influx, Callings, and Religion. "The Faculty

of the College," Alcott was told, "are well-disposed, but timid as having the orthodoxy of the college to maintain collectively, though quite inclined to see you individually and in private—Professors Porter and Fisher, particularly." During his week in New Haven, Alcott spoke to the pupils at the Webster Public School, met with the teachers, and called upon several of the students and professors at Yale, in addition to his conversations at the Young Men's Institute and the Y.M.C.A. Particularly at the last conversations on religion, Alcott noted many students. As a result of these talks, Professor Fisher, at first cordial, preached a sermon, warning the students against the "new philosophical infidelity, hinting significantly at its seductive influences." Fisher implied that opportunities like those of the last few evenings should be sedulously avoided by all young men, the students in theology particularly. "But acceptance by Yale were too much to hope for, or receive quite yet," wrote the philosophical Alcott, March 18, 1857.

Nevertheless, while this series of conversations may have seemed disappointing, at least one young man received intellectual stimulation and personal inspiration that materially influenced his later career. This was William T. Harris, then a Junior at Yale, who was later to become the celebrated Superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools, and United States Commissioner of Education from 1889 to 1906. Harris tells, in his memoir of Alcott, how at that time he had thrown overboard the ideas of the world which had been imposed on him by dogmatic elders, and was searching for new bases of conduct. In this stage he says he had been attracted to phrenology; had adopted the diet of the vegetarians; was an ardent advocate of the spelling reform; and had looked at gymnastics, water-cure, dress reform, mesmerism, and spiritualism as promising a new and better order of things. That part of Alcott's talks which had to do with diet, temperament, or social reform was therefore agreeable, but

not especially influential. But when Alcott began to talk about the Soul, he worked a revolution in the mind of the young man, who now began to form some idea of the higher intuitive power of the Soul, by which the limits of mere sensuous experience could be transcended. Harris continued his study of the idealistic philosophy in the works of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. He finally became the foremost student of Hegel in this country, translating many of his works and publishing them in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, which Harris founded in St. Louis in 1867.

It was primarily as a teacher that Bronson Alcott held his conversations. He talked of spirit in a philosophical sense, of spirit as manifested in family life, in representative men, in religion, in morals, in government; but always he was primarily interested in the moral education of children. As in New Haven, everywhere Alcott went, he held meetings with the teachers and visited the schools. He would refuse an invitation to preach, in order to talk to children in the Sunday Schools. In teaching adults as well as children, in teaching informally wherever he happened to be, in the home, school, or church, Alcott gained a much more comprehensive idea of the teaching process than he had ever had before. Of this later teaching he wrote, February 19, 1853:

Good teaching is the temporary using of another's talents and senses instead of one's own. Lend us your Mind, for the moment, says the pupil, that we may see how things look through that prism. And he is the master who so serves this company that prospects seen never before, nor dreamed of, become present and memorable thereafter forever. Eyes are perspective, prospect, and a kingdom. Eyes, O Lord, Eyes please give us, and the sovereign serene sights to see thee in all thy hidings about us and within us, now and in all time coming.

Alcott's success was greater in the West than in the East, and in this unparalleled series of journeys, beginning in the winter of 1853-1854 and continuing to 1881-1882, he at last

became in fact a traveling missionary of culture. The conversations steadily increased in reputation and popularity, and the financial return increased in like proportion, ranging from the single, round, shiny dollar the philosopher brought home from his first venture, to the thousand dollars which rewarded his last.

The expressed purpose of the tours was one of education, to spread among the people the doctrines of spiritual culture, and to propagate progressive, free ideas of education throughout the United States from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. In this endeavor, Alcott traveled thousands of miles, visiting communities both large and small. No elegance, such as that of the Tafts in Cincinnati, served to awe him; no country schoolhouse was too humble to receive his message. Not only were the larger cities such as Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, included in Alcott's western itineraries, but also smaller towns, such as Medina, Ohio; and Keokuk, and Fort Dodge, Iowa. Occasionally the trips were arranged to include as many colleges as possible: Oberlin, Antioch, Depauw, and the University of Illinois, for example. Travel was slow and uncomfortable, but the inconveniences and dangers of journeying never served to dampen his ardor.

Alcott's methods on these western tours were similar to those he used in the East. He always liked to stay with some family, and they would usually act as agent in organizing a series of conversations, either at a stated price for the series, or with voluntary contributions. After the early conversations and talks, other opportunities for approaching the people usually appeared. Pastors often invited Alcott to enter their pulpits; or if not, the Sunday Schools were always open to him. Clubs of all sorts were anxious to obtain visiting speakers, and as he dined from family to family, Alcott never lost an opportunity to spread his doctrines.

The superintendent of the schools, also, was usually

anxious to display his imposing school buildings to the eminent educator from the East. Alcott, genuinely admiring the elegance of the buildings and the free methods of teaching, was generous with praise. Everywhere he went, he found methods having much in common with those he had introduced so long ago in the little Connecticut villages. Speaking to the teachers, Alcott commended friendly atmospheres, and teaching that was adapted to the needs of individual pupils. In the classroom, he demonstrated that he had lost none of his old skill in dealing with children. After a visit to a kindergarten in Rome, New York, the winter he was eighty-two, Alcott recorded that he had "had a lucky time with the little ones, telling stories and showing them pretty steps for their amusements." For the elementary children he was always ready with *Pilgrim's Progress*, a Krummacher "Parable" or the autobiographical story of "the pedler boy." In later years, the story of the Little Women was eagerly demanded everywhere. In the high schools and normal schools, Alcott usually lectured on psychology.

The schools of the West Alcott considered far superior to those of the East. In size and magnificence, the buildings reminded him of hotels, and the methods of teaching were far freer. Each time that he expressed his admiration for the Western schools, Alcott wished that he could take the superintendent and schoolmasters of Boston to visit these superior classrooms.

Though it is impossible to estimate with any precision the exact educational result of these journeys in which Alcott assailed the citadel of the community through the parlor, the pulpit, and the school, of one effect we may be sure. Everywhere that he went, the best minds collected about him and centers of influence were established that acted as permanent distributors of culture. Whatever philosophic thought existed in a place was stirred into activity by his presence. All people who heard him felt attracted to think-

ing, felt that there were within them great stores of insight beyond those already attained.

In addition to his influence in arousing the powers of thought latent in every community, Alcott also served as a medium of communication between the East and the West. Upon reading a comment to this effect in *The Commonwealth*, Alcott remarked, "I wish the freer intercourse recommended between thinking minds may ensue, believing that the East would find benefits greater even than the West; unlifting the weight of superstitions and conventions that press heavily upon the mind and manners of New England." Though the admission of Western superiority somewhat humbled him at first, Alcott enjoyed emphasizing this superiority in conservative Eastern circles. The freshness, originality, directness, and logical quality of the minds he met in the West delighted Alcott, and though he yearly expressed his pleasure in this progressive spirit, it is best summarized in the *Journal* of January 18, 1872:

I cannot resist the conviction,—a little humbling to New England pride—that the West, in every thing properly American, as distinguished from English, and the provincial spirit of the East, is taking the lead, dispatching matters, whether of thought or of practice, in the broader and more liberal method which our century dictates. Philosophy is published at St. Louis. Education finds there also its most liberal advocates. The Western Colleges favor a more thoughtful culture than either Harvard or Yale, and Divinity becomes the less sectarian and exclusive as one leaves sight of the Eastern cities. The business, the enterprise of the West, is already conceded.

Alcott's western tours finally resulted in the founding of The Concord School of Philosophy in 1878. William T. Harris and Dr. H. K. Jones, of Jacksonville, Illinois were instrumental in building up the school, which was attended by many western teachers each summer. To Alcott, this school was the culmination of all his dreams, and the disappoint-

ment and obloquy of earlier years were almost forgotten. Now the school seems important, not in itself, but as a symbol "that any extravagance of idealism may become matter of fact in the future."

But the story is anticipated, for Alcott's Journals serve also to illuminate one other portion of the story of the development of American education. Bronson Alcott served as Superintendent of the Concord Public Schools from 1859 to 1864. Here again, the details are not important for themselves, but for what they may mean. They open the door to the public schools of a Massachusetts village just before the Civil War, so that one can ask, "What has happened in the thirty-five years of public education that have elapsed since Bronson Alcott first taught in the villages of Connecticut?" More than that, the thirty-five years become in a way the measuring stick of a man. What has become of the ideas so enthusiastically advocated by the young school-master? Will he still advocate them now that he is sixty and a superintendent? And if these theories survived the thirty-five years, may they also be pertinent for the future?

The long years of teaching and the repeated visits to all sorts of schools throughout the East and West made an admirable preparation for Alcott's superintendency of the Concord schools. At that time, the office of superintendent was new in villages like Concord. The Massachusetts legislature had passed in 1850 laws permitting villages to abolish the old district system and to give the control of the schools to one committee representing the whole town. This committee might either exercise the control and supervision of the schools in its own person or delegate its powers to a superintendent. Concord was prompt to act in accordance with this law, forming a committee with one representative from each of the nine school districts, and choosing a superintendent who was to oversee the schools, make monthly visits, and monthly reports. The precise language of the Concord com-

mittee was: "The aim and object of the Superintendent shall be to elevate the standard of the schools, increase the average attendance and awaken the interest of the pupils, improve the methods of teaching, and promote a better understanding between the different teachers, and between the teachers and parents of the pupils."

The first Superintendent of Schools in Concord was Dr. Joseph Reynolds, whose first report was that of 1856-57. His supervision seems to have been of the general type usually performed by school committees, so that it was left to Bronson Alcott to bring to the office the broad outlook of the professional educator who devoted all of his time and energy to the affairs of the schools. Since he came to the office in the early days when the duties of superintendent were defined as those of a sort of goodwill or liaison officer, Bronson Alcott's work as superintendent may be considered typical of pioneer work in administration.

Alcott held a long conference with the school committee in which he set forth in some detail his ideas on education before he accepted the position, which paid a salary of one hundred dollars a year. He was delighted to be back in harness, and approached his duties with an enthusiasm almost equaling the old, though with a caution born of experience. As in Cheshire and Bristol, Alcott soon found he still had to contend with penury, ignorance, prejudice, and jealousy, but he himself was much more tolerant, wishing to respect these points of view by showing the better methods to be the cheapest in the end. "It is well to avoid provocation where appeals can be made that serve the higher ends and substitute knowledge for ignorance in kindly and unsuspected ways."

Alcott and the committee prepared written regulations for the school which contained the usual specifications concerning length of term, times of opening and closing, absences, punctuality, and reading of the scriptures. They also

set up detailed standards for the Intermediate School and the High School. These were changes that had taken place since Alcott's early teaching, and they were changes in which he had had no part. These belonged in the departments of Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. One provision of the regulations, however, bears the marks of Alcott's hand. This was one which gave each teacher one afternoon a month in which to visit every other teacher in the town. All the teachers took advantage of this provision and Alcott thought it was worthwhile. It brought them together professionally, and it gave them the opportunity of seeing good teaching. They would also see some poor work, but Alcott felt that in its way that too was educational. The teachers were also permitted one afternoon a month in which they might take their pupils to visit other schools, or on excursions into the woods and fields. These variations of the daily routine were accepted gladly by both teachers and pupils.

Alcott also inaugurated joint meetings of the entire school committee and all the teachers to discuss common problems. They were concerned with recitation, various methods of school checks and examinations, methods of discipline, textbooks, and conversations. His own early work as a teacher had always been hampered by lack of understanding. This way, neither teachers nor committee members could go blindly along in the old routine. They had at least to think about educational problems, and they were more likely to recognize that there were two sides to every question.

In his visits to the schools, Alcott was indefatigable, usually going on foot even to the far corners of the town, visiting never more than two schools a day. As he was in general pleased with the progress of the schools, in a short time both teachers and pupils learned to enjoy his visits. He did not interrupt the regular routine with any elaborate examinations, as committee members sometimes did, but

listened quietly to the work, asking for perhaps the last half hour in which to talk to the children, sometimes about regular attendance and punctuality, discipline, or understanding what they learned. Always, however, there must be time saved for a parable or reading from *Pilgrim's Progress*. The following extract from the Journal, January 18, 1861, shows Alcott at sixty entering into the thought and ways of children as skillfully as he had at thirty:

At Miss Goodall's and read *Pilgrim's Progress* to the delight of the little ones, indulging them as usual with the running conversation on the images and incidents of the Allegory, interspersed with playful sallies and applications of the moral, as I paraphrase and inweave pertinent considerations into the text. There is never any want of interest, or hands upheld for the reading to close: "Dream on and longer," is the common vote, and I show them at each reading, what promises of pleasures they have in reserve in the leaves yet unread. Ah! could the parents come as unreservedly to the tasting from the Springs, and taste deeply as these little ducks, and as gaily.

A severe test of any administrator is whether or not he can inspire those under his direction to carry out his ideas, and at the same time to give free reign to that originality and initiative which are essential to success. In supervising the teachers Alcott showed no trace of that dogmatism often characteristic of the older, successful teacher. In his conferences, Alcott always tried to judge each teacher according to her own aims, and to inspire the teacher's confidence in the methods which seemed natural to her. "Does the teacher awaken thought, strengthen the mind, kindle the affections, call the conscience, the common sense, into lively and controlling activity, so promoting the love of study, the practice of the virtues, habits that shall accompany the children outwards into life?" was the question he asked himself.

This question, printed in his second School Report, shows clearly that Alcott had not essentially changed in

thirty-five years. Candidates for the high school had to be able to "pass a good examination in Greenleaf's Common School Arithmetic as far as Proportion; in Cornell's Geography and Maps," and so on, but the superintendent wanted to know if they had acquired in school good habits of study and conduct that would go with them through life. His constant interest and kindly aid to the teachers could not but bear fruit, so that by the second year of his work, Alcott felt he could see on the part of both teachers and pupils a growing realization of new aims. There seemed to be a new respect and sympathy for the child, and a closer, livelier relation between teachers and pupils. He felt, too, that there was coming to be better understanding of the true uses of books, for reference, as a clue to the sense, not as something to be memorized. The teacher was becoming more of an interpreter, less a drillmaster.

Alcott and the school committee published a report in 1859-60, that was praised by Henry Barnard as the best ever compiled. He suggested that the next report be enlarged for wide distribution. This was done and the *School Report* of 1860-61 is a minute description of the work of the Concord schools, as well as a compendium of Alcott's ideas of education. The book bears inescapable marks of his influences from *Pilgrim's Progress* on the reading list to the concluding account of the graceful, lively exhibition that was substituted for the customary final examination.

At sixty Bronson Alcott had learned one lesson he had not quite known at twenty-five. He had always said that schools should be closely related to everyday life—to religious feeling, to work, to family groups, and he had tried to teach only that which was useful. He had begun to teach using what was near at hand, as he had done with the geography of the school yard. He still believed in those principles, but now they meant more to him. He knew now who his own teachers had been, and he had found none of them

in schoolrooms. They had been the men and women of Wolcott, the blacks and the whites of Virginia, the reformers of Boston and those as well, who had threatened to mob him. There were the people he had met journeying all over the West, and there were the people at home, Ellery Channing, Emerson, and Thoreau. It was the world that had been his teacher, and the world must be brought into the classroom. Learning was insufficient; "only life alone, life like a torch lighting the head at the heart," could satisfy these children, who, if they did not find life in the schoolroom, were eagerly seeking it at every shop and fireside. All New England and the West formed an open college, admitting old and young alike, and Alcott could foresee newspapers and magazines superseding primers, textbooks, and professors.

All these influences Alcott would bring into the schoolroom. He wanted to illustrate the work with the new art of photography, and he wanted a newspaper or magazine suited to boys and girls. He thought they were deserving of something good enough to be spared from being used as wrapping paper for their lunches. He thought the magazine should have in it something of sports, of biography, science and discoveries, accounts of libraries, museums, and the theatre, as well as politics and government.

Alcott had an even more practical way of bringing the school and the community together. He planned a "Concord Atlas." He had, from the beginning, used the local community as a nucleus of study, and now he visualized the realization of all the possibilities of the plan as it had been growing in his mind through many years. Henry Thoreau was the key man. For in Henry Thoreau he had "a sort of resident Surveyor-General of the town's farms, farmers, animals, and everything else it contains,—who makes more of it than most persons with a continent at their call." If Henry Thoreau would just set his "ten senses" to work upon such an Atlas of Concord for its citizens, "giving such account of

the world they inhabit, with such hints concerning the one he lives in, as he pleases," then life would indeed have come into the schoolroom. How better could children study geography, than through the eyes of Henry Thoreau, lent to them in such a book? There was just one better way—walking with Henry Thoreau himself. Alcott had that in mind, too. "I can conceive of the surveyor employing some of the understrappers for studying under his eye by carrying his chain for him, each young Agassiz and Kane taking his turn as it came," he wrote. He was anxious that every student should take to his legs, carrying his maps in his pocket if he please, but actually seeing with his eyes the things he was studying.

Nor was Thoreau the only one of Concord's favored citizens to be asked to contribute to the education of its children. Emerson, who was often drafted to speak at meetings or any such public occasion as an examination, would have been a contributor to Alcott's "Atlas," which he elsewhere called his "Concord Anthology." In this collection Alcott hoped to place suitable writings from Bulkeley, the founder of Concord, Wood, Ripley, Hoar, Shattuck, Frost, Jarvis, Mann, Peabody, Bradford, Hawthorne, and Channing, as well as Thoreau and Emerson. Alcott had actually collected some material for such a book, but various circumstances such as Thoreau's death in 1862, the Civil War, and the close of Alcott's work in the schools prevented its completion.

Alcott's *School Report* tells of another important type of work carried on during his Concord superintendency. This was his work with parents. In Cheshire he had lamented that parents did not understand his aim, but he assumed that his proper work was with the children. The years had changed that. One of his first acts as superintendent was to get permission to use the schoolhouses for Sunday evening meetings with parents. One of the parents acted as chair-

man, and Alcott and other committee members would lead the discussions. The subjects talked about in these meetings were Relation of Parents to Schools, Family Life, School Books, Religion in Education, The State's Duties to Children, True and False Idea of Education, Moral Culture, Methods of Teaching, Experiences in School Keeping, and The Good School Master. The meetings were well-attended, and Alcott was much encouraged. William Russell came from Lancaster to speak at one of them. Alcott was so keenly alive to community relations, that he would have liked to have the people meeting at the schoolhouses to discuss topics of interest to them as men and neighbors, as well as parents. It is not possible to trace any direct connection between these early meetings of parents and the national organization of parents and teachers which had its specific origin in the National Congress of Mothers in 1897. There is no special significance in early meetings that antedated an influential national organization, but who can estimate the significance of fifty years and more of teaching and preaching a respect for children and better methods for their education?

It is noticeable that the elder Alcott was much more skillful in attaining his aims than he had been as a young man. Then he had railed in the privacy of his diary about the stupidity and ignorance of parents and the avarice of the public. Through many years of experience he had learned that the parents must, in effect, come to school with the children. As part of this program he substituted for the final examination a gay and lively exhibition, with flowers, music, and poetry composed for the occasion. At the end, the children surprised Alcott by giving him a beautifully illustrated copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

During this period of public life, Alcott seems to have been somewhat in demand as a speaker at teachers' institutes, where one of his favorite topics was the necessity of teach-

ing the English language as a classic. At Lawrence he addressed an audience of a thousand parents and teachers on this subject, speaking with ease and pleasure to himself, and holding the close attention of his audience. Many of these institutes seem to have been held without sufficient preparation; and after one in particular Alcott was quite insistent that livelier methods could make these meetings far more profitable and attractive. John Philbrick, Superintendent of the Boston schools, who was always most cordial, perhaps even deferential to Alcott, agreed with him heartily. Alcott's extreme interest in all modes of education is illustrated by a conversation and speaking tour in 1864 which included the normal schools at Framingham, Bridgewater, and Salem; the reform school at Westborough; Mr. Allen's school at Plymouth; and the public schools at Worcester, Plymouth, and Marblehead, where Alcott also preached and addressed the Sunday School.

Alcott was well acquainted with Henry Barnard, who visited him about once a year. Each time that he came, Barnard would discuss with Alcott the memoir he wished William Russell or Emerson to prepare for the series of educational biographies then being printed in each number of Barnard's *American Journal of Education*. Russell prepared this desired account, but for some reason not now apparent, it was never printed. Alcott was hurt by this inexplicable omission, and both he and Russell attempted, with no success, to recover the manuscript that it might be preserved in Alcott's Autobiographical Collections, if not in print with the accounts of his contemporaries.

It is pleasant to find that Concord did, in some measure, appreciate Alcott's efforts in behalf of her schools, efforts which were not at all commensurate with the nominal sum paid to him. In the *School Report* of 1862, the section written by the committee themselves pays the following tribute to Alcott:

Since the new organization of the committee, three years ago, the town has had the services of a Superintendent of Schools, whose zeal, ability and devotion have proved his eminent fitness for the office. He has brought to his work extraordinary endowments and long experience, and he has doubled or trebled the labor required of him by the terms of his office. He has worked, too, not only for the town, but for the State and the world; for his annual reports, widely circulated and received with appreciation, have done much to advance true ideas of education in other towns, and throughout the land.⁸⁹

It seems unfortunate that such a mutually satisfactory arrangement as this should not have been allowed to continue indefinitely, but Alcott was not re-elected in the spring of 1865. To Emerson, then a member of the School Committee, fell the task of breaking the sad news to him. The nebulous phrase, "some informality in the transactions" is the only explanation recorded in Alcott's Journals, but the Report of the School Committee for the following year is somewhat more explicit. According to their account, the Town, at its annual meeting, had failed to signify its desire to have a superintendent elected, so that the committee had no authority to choose such an officer, nor could the town treasurer pay him should he be appointed. Accordingly, the committee did not feel at liberty to continue the supervision, and there was no superintendent that year. Alcott's first reaction was that he would serve without pay, "lest the schools suffer." However, local politics seem to have operated, for there is no indication that Alcott retained any connection with the schools, and the following year, his predecessor, Dr. Joseph Reynolds, was again elected superintendent. Alcott did not return to visit the public schools of Concord until the winter of 1875-1876, when Edward Emerson was superintendent. Then Alcott made his rounds just as he had in 1865 in order that he might compare the condition of the schools with that in which he had left them.

⁸⁹ *Concord School Report*, 1862, 8.

One or two of the teachers using "the philosophic method" pleased him very much; of the others, he charitably remarked that he must not hold the poor ladies up against his ideal standard. Attending the examination that winter, where among the teachers were some who had been pupils during his term of office, Alcott found that he was expected to speak as of old, and that he was no less ready to do so. As he saw the things he had striven to introduce made a part of accepted practice, Alcott was happy in the realization of the principle which had always actuated his conduct—"Ideals are possible."

The later years of Alcott's life were made much more pleasant because of his daughter Louisa's success as a writer. The greatest benefit she conferred upon him was not with respect to money—he had long been accustomed to doing without that—but she brought welcome recognition to her father as an educator. All her books exemplified the sensible ideas concerning the education of girls which had characterized the Alcott home, but the "Plumfield School" of *Little Men*, in particular, drew attention because of its novelty. For this reason, Alcott was delighted with the opportunity to republish his *Record of a School*, many of whose features were transcribed in Louisa's books. As he studied the book after the passage of thirty-five years, Alcott felt that the punishments and modes of correction were not just what he would practice then, yet he thought that the "natural and lively" methods of instruction would still quicken life and thought in parents and teachers.

Elizabeth Peabody, whom Alcott met at a teachers' meeting, wanted to write a new preface to the book, and Alcott joyfully agreed. In this preface Miss Peabody had a graceful phrase about the "fitness in making the childish fiction of the daughter play the grateful part of herald to the wise and beautiful truths of the father," but she went on to esteem Alcott only as he had prepared her for Froebel. More-

over, the Preface grew into notes and an appendix in which she enthusiastically recommended Froebel. Alcott reluctantly bowed before the lady, but Louisa and Thomas Niles, the publisher, declined to have the book published with the qualifying statements. Miss Peabody refused to change or omit them, and there the matter stood from 1871 to 1874, when the book was finally published with the preface, but without the other emendations. So changed was the public attitude toward Alcott that the press was affectionate and kindly in reviewing this third edition, called *Record of Mr. Alcott's School*.

The Concord School of Philosophy, founded in 1878 and held in the rustic building to one side of the Orchard House, became the visible symbol of the success of Alcott's work in the West. Two westerners, William T. Harris of St. Louis and Dr. H. K. Jones of Jacksonville, Illinois, were active in the establishment of the school, to which came many teachers from the Middle West. The best known scientific and philosophical men and women of the time constituted the faculty, and the students, even on the hottest days, eagerly gathered to listen and to discuss for themselves. The feminine contingent of the Alcott family were somewhat dismayed at the influx of loquacious visitors, but they were proud, too, of the general admiration accorded to their father as Dean of the school. Alcott's enjoyment of his long-projected college was short-lived, for he was incapacitated by a stroke in the fall of 1882. He died March 4, 1888, and was buried in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery of Concord.

As one reviews the career of this teacher, it is plain to be seen that Alcott had changed little in the thirty-five years that had intervened between his first teaching and his last. He had become more tolerant, yes, and more skillful in spreading his ideas. But he was still the same idealist, still the enthusiast for the development of Spirit. In old age, he was younger than ever, for he retained his ability to see to



BRONSON ALCOTT IN HIS STUDY AT ORCHARD HOUSE, CONCORD

the heart of matters, piercing the crusts of tradition and habit. In the young man this had been an impertinence, in the old man it was wisdom.

The world had changed more than Bronson Alcott had. The New England, which in 1825 had still embraced eighteenth century ideas of religion, politics, and education, had, by the later years, become "the era of reform." The seaboard no longer controlled the country, and the men of the West had brought many changes with them. A majority of the people had declared with the original little group of abolitionists that it was not right for one race to subjugate another. They had not as yet gotten around to thinking very much about the subjugation of women and children in the great mills of Lowell and Lynn, but that, too, would come. People were beginning to agitate for temperance, and the women even talked about getting the vote.

One would scarcely recognize the schools. Where once a local committee had hired anyone they pleased to keep school in the drafty little buildings as long as the money held out, now, under the supervision of state boards of education, there were classified schools in session for regular periods, taught by certified teachers, many of them trained in the normal schools. It was a far cry from the primitive conditions that had impelled James G. Carter to write in 1821 his series of *Letters . . . on the Free Schools of New England*, and to begin the agitation that culminated in the passage of the bill creating the State Board of Education in Massachusetts in 1837 and the consequent reforms of Horace Mann, the first Secretary. In Connecticut, too, the new school laws drafted by Henry Barnard, the normal school at New Britain, and Barnard's *American Journal of Education* indicated great improvement since the days when citizens like Samuel J. May had felt impelled to call together the Hartford Society for the Improvement of Common Schools. And on to the South and West, the struggle for free

common schools for all the people was carried by men born or educated in New England, men like Calvin Stowe, Samuel Lewis, and Samuel Galloway in Ohio; Caleb Mills in Indiana; John D. Pierce and Isaac E. Crary in Michigan; and John Swett in California. It was a magnificent achievement to have created the world's first democratic system of free public education where any child, boy or girl, might be educated in the common schools, go on to high school, and on to the normal school or to the state university.

This achievement of organizing a system of education is one in which Bronson Alcott had little direct influence. Indeed, its chief historian, Ellwood P. Cubberley, does not mention Alcott's name in his *Public Education in the United States*. The common school revival is mirrored in Alcott's Journals in the accounts of meetings with Mann and Barnard, of attendance at the Boston Institute of Public Instruction and at later teachers' institutes, of contributions to Russell's *American Journal of Education*, *The Common School Journal*, and Barnard's *American Journal of Education*, and of his service as Superintendent of Schools in Concord. This movement was one chiefly of administrative improvement, and none of the outstanding administrators made notable contributions to psychology or educational thought. They were liberal, and they recommended freer and more efficient methods of teaching, but they were not primarily thinkers. In this era of physical improvement the function of the philosopher was somewhat ignored. When the work of rebuilding was well under way, then educators were receptive toward the philosophers. By 1860 they were anxious to hear Alcott in teachers' institutes, and by 1895 they were ready for John Dewey. Only since that time has philosophy been in the foreground of American education, but the stream of thought has always been there. Bronson Alcott's story, therefore, is the reverse side of the Common School Revival, the story of our first educational philosopher.

CHAPTER VIII
YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Only the noble and heroic outlive in time their exit from it
Bronson Alcott, "*Orphic Sayings*."

FOR a man who is known as a transcendental philosopher, Bronson Alcott was surprisingly practical. To draw together the threads of his thought, to see just what contributions of value Bronson Alcott may have made to his own time and to posterity, one must turn, not to his published writings, but to his teaching. His teaching, of course, is partially mirrored in the two practical books, the *Record of a School*, and *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, but is more completely set forth in his own manuscript Journals. Alcott is perhaps unique among so-called theorists, in that he always attempted to put his theories into practice. He and his kind were somewhat embarrassing to certain other transcendental thinkers, who were concerned with achieving perfect expression of their ideas, but were content to let others try them out.

Emerson, for example, continually urged Alcott to formulate his thoughts into a logical system of principles, and once threatened to lock his friend up in jail until he should formulate his dogma, until he should find out "what was memory, what fancy, what instinct, what analysis." In defense, Alcott replied calmly that he should feel quite at home in any company composed of Socrates, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Behmen, and Swedenborg. Emerson hinted that these were all exact persons, and could formulate something,

but Alcott insisted that he needed no exact book or system, that he himself was an influence, doing good by the indirect inspiration of others. It was a difference of concept. Most men wanted books to stand as symbols of themselves, but Bronson Alcott thought of himself as the visible symbol of spiritual realities. No other was needed.

Of course, the modern biographer wishes, with Emerson, that Alcott had insured the perpetuation of his thought by formulating it into a neat little bundle of principles. But the method has its disadvantages, at that. One generation of students would have memorized these principles, and then as a new school of thought advanced, Alcott's concepts, in outworn phraseology, would have been discarded. Rather, the man has left us fifty manuscript volumes containing descriptions of what he did, and his ideas, formulated not once, but many times. In effect, he says to us, "It is all here; it is for you to choose."

One thing is certain, in spite of eddyings and excursions every whither, there was both center and direction to Alcott's thought. The child himself was always the center of Alcott's interest, and all his investigations went in the direction of spirit. Systems of education have always looked at the child, to be sure, but they have looked at him not for himself, but as useful material for the services of the State, the Army, the Church, or Business. When the visual imagination of Bronson Alcott gazed at a child, he certainly saw in the background no soldier's uniforms or cleric's robes. He probably did not even see the denim and calico of reality. He saw a Soul, coming from God, reaching out to touch the people and things of this world. He himself was there to help the child learn of the mysteries of time and space, and to remind him, if he could, of the glory from which he had come. "*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not,*" said Jesus, *'for of such is the kingdom of heaven'*—Words, these, full of meanings; but how little understood;

and how seldom applied to the true purposes of education! Words which when understood, and applied in their true sense, and manner, will regenerate the present systems of education, and of society," wrote Alcott in 1829. It was these words that made Bronson Alcott a revolutionary educator. And so he came to this conclusion: "Education should not be regarded as a process instituted on the human being, to fit him for a specific employment, by the installation of a given amount of knowledge into his intellect; but *as the complete development of human nature, with a view to the habitual discharge of all its relations.*"

Education, then, must first be individual, for the complete fulfillment of each person; it must be social, that man's relations with his fellows be improved; and it must be spiritual, to teach him of that reality from which he had come and to which he would return. In his flat statement of what education is not, Alcott gives a clue, if one is needed, to one of the reasons for his "failures." For most parents of that day, as well as of this, considered the acquisition of knowledge to be the primary aim of education. Bronson Alcott always relegated it to a subordinate place as a part of the development of the whole child. Alcott's definition is comprehensive enough that there can be little quarrel with it. The question then becomes: how did he go about attaining this aim?

Bronson Alcott was not a traditionalist. In many respects his ignorance of history and his disregard for its lessons were handicaps, but there was an advantage, too. If he did not accept the lessons of the past, at least he did not perpetuate many of its mistakes. He once wrote in his "Orphic Sayings," "most men are on the ebb, but now and then a man comes riding down sublimely in high hope from God on the flood tide of the soul, as she sets into the coasts of time, submerging old landmarks, and laying waste the labors of centuries. A new man wears channels broad and deep into

the banks of the ages; he washes away ancient boundaries, and sets afloat institutions, creeds, usages, which clog the ever flowing Present, stranding them on the shores of the Past. Such deluge is the harbinger of a new world, a renovated age." Alcott himself was such a "new" man. He looked at children with new eyes.

Probably the first thing that Alcott saw as he really tried to find out what children were like was that they were active. It seems as though no parent, no teacher of an elementary school could miss that fact. And yet, no system of education had been based upon it; activity was rather a necessary nuisance to be curbed as much as possible. Bronson Alcott, however, accepted the fact of activity, and it had various ramifications for him. First came the changes in furniture so that bodies could be comfortably seated, and changes in arrangement, that there might be room to play. He introduced physical exercises at a time when knitting and sewing were the only such activities permitted in most schools. It must have been at least partly this observation that led him to take children outdoors for geography lessons. It should be said, too, that sometimes both Alcott and the children were so interested in other things that they completely forgot to stop for recess. In general, though, it is true that Alcott's teaching recognized in theory and in practice the active nature of children.

Bronson Alcott also differed with the Calvinistic past when he looked at children and declared them to be innately good. How anyone could ever have slandered the purity and innocence of a child by calling him a "limb of Satan" Alcott never could understand. It made considerable difference to a teacher which he believed. Under the older theory, any impulse the child had was sure to be evil, and the schoolmaster's clear duty was to lick the Hell out of him. If, however, a child's impulses were innately good, then his intuitions might be relied upon for moral guidance, and self-

government. Then one might utilize his creative urges and build from them. Then, and only then, might one have "a child-centered school," where the impulses to action came from the children themselves.

Bronson Alcott's psychology was more derivative than was his idea of the child, although by nature he was an experimentalist in his attitude toward psychology. As early as the second year of his teaching, he suggested that the "mental philosophers" might well turn their attention to children and observe the manner in which they obtained their ideas, their first attempts at comparison, naming, etc. Alcott's aim was always, "Discover the laws of thought, and teach in accordance with them." His interpretation of the "laws of thought" changed, as befitted an experimentalist, but his faith in the method remained.

Alcott's psychology was basically Lockian, in which the senses are regarded as the only source of knowledge, or the conveyors of experience to the mind. This belief, of course, made it important that teaching be inductive, that visible and tangible objects be used in introducing ideas. It may have been this Lockian psychology, in which the body is clearly of importance as the sense receptor of thought, that helped to impress upon Alcott the educational importance of the physical well-being of the child.

At least two of Alcott's "laws of thought" have retained validity to the present day. One was that of association. He felt that learning was facilitated by pleasant associations, and he took pains that the physical surroundings and the mental atmosphere should be agreeable. He knew well that associations of some variety were sure to accompany learning, and one of the reasons why he favored the conversational method of teaching was that thus he could find out what associations were being formed and attempt to correct them if they were unfavorable.

Modern psychologists, throwing in the phrase "all other

things being equal," have also approved Alcott's theory that knowledge for which the learner recognizes a use is more readily learned than that which has no use, or whose utility is not apparent. When Alcott began to teach, the subjects of study were chiefly inherited from the medieval trivium or the Protestant reformation. Some subjects, such as the Catechism, he discarded completely, and others, like writing, he taught, not as a fine art, but as incidental to the expression of thought.

When Alcott became a transcendentalist, he modified his acceptance of Locke's psychology. Or rather, instead of considering the sensory experience the only source of knowledge, he added the intuition as a way of gaining insight beyond the experience of the senses. This meant the study of the self, or human nature, if the child was consciously to find in the depths of his own being the key to his understanding of man, of nature, and of God. Only in the Temple School did this intuitional theory of knowledge dominate Alcott's practice. At that time, his belief in it was such that he considered that from a group of twenty well-selected children he could draw forth in their conversation everything that is in Plato.

Of course, in a system of education based upon intuitional knowledge of truth and self-directed pupil activity, the role of the teacher became that of a guide, not a taskmaster. Emerson reported Alcott's saying that "a teacher is one who can assist the child in obeying his own mind. . . ." Books, too, became subordinate. "Observation more than books, experience rather than persons, are the prime educators." And the older he grew, the more appreciative Alcott became of the educative influences of life itself.

To Alcott, life was so completely a whole that he could not even make the same distinction other people did between theory and practice. Life in school should simply be an extension of life outside school, or *vice versa*. He never

could see any point in cutting up what they did in the schoolroom into little subjects, and so a modern educator might say his schools were "integrated." Literature sometimes served as geography, and a reading passage might be also a lesson in defining. For the older students, the journals served to integrate all the work of the school.

Like many versatile teachers, Bronson Alcott was more concerned with method than he was with the subjects in the curriculum. There was some justification for this. For example, one of his main aims was to teach children to think for themselves. In accomplishing this, it made little difference whether they were studying religion or geography, but the teacher's method made all the difference between success and failure. In developing conversation as his distinctive method of teaching, Alcott was consciously following the example of the men whom he considered to be the greatest teachers of all time—Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus. Alcott's description of Jesus' methods shows the results he similarly hoped to obtain: "Its power is apparent in his treatment of multitudes, or dealings with persons singly. How salient, and how subtle; undermining the premise of his antagonist's assertion at a stroke, convicting, if not convincing him out of his own mouth. It was the intuitive method, the dialectic of the spirit. He spake thus effectively because he obeyed the laws of thought, 'knowing what was in man,' by intuition, not by 'letters'."

Alcott's schools were always basically social in their broadest implications, and in this respect they come very close to modern ideals. Of course, in looking to education as the force which would effect the improvement of man by changing the very conditions of his being, Alcott considered it basically a social agency. The schoolroom was to be a laboratory where new ideas concerning the nature of man and the conditions of his development were to be discovered, and tested. If they proved worthy, the new generation, edu-

cated in their light, might be expected to produce a better social order.

Alcott's schools were consciously social, too, in the stress on the relation between human beings. Alcott was always courteous and respectful to his pupils, and they to him. The "common conscience" of the group was made the standard for conduct. The children were taught to ask themselves the Kantian question: Would it be all right for every member of the group to act as I wish to act? If not, then the child learned to restrain himself, not to respond to external authority.

Alcott's broad view of the school as the extension of the home meant, of course, that there had to be closest cooperation between home and school for full success. In Cheshire and Bristol he failed miserably for lack of understanding and cooperation. By the time he had reached Concord he realized that part of the teacher's task was to educate parents as well as children and he had developed methods for interesting them.

Bronson Alcott was able, then, to an almost surprising degree, to fulfill his aims as an educator. He did attempt the complete development of children, allowing them creative experience in speech and writing, and inaugurating physical education. Art and music were introduced as special subjects. His schools were basically social, to an extent unheard of in his day, but, so great was his respect for individuality that the development of social aims never came before that of the child himself. And finally, Alcott considered that man was not complete when he had attended to his duty to himself and to his fellowmen. There remained his relationship with the spiritual powers of the universe.

Anyone familiar with modern educational theory and practice will recognize that much of Alcott's thought and work was like that now known as "Progressive." There is the same denial of the acquisition of knowledge as the primary

aim of education, the same attention to the needs of the physiological nature of the child, the same turning to the inner drives and interests of the child as incentives to learning. Because Bronson Alcott and the progressives look realistically at the biological needs of the child, both stress active methods of learning, and both have introduced new material, such as sex education, into the curriculum. Both are anxious to aid the development of the individual child to his highest potentialities, and both realize that the child must develop not only as an individual, but as a cooperative, socially-minded member of a group, whether that group be the school, the family, the city, state, nation, or world. From this there has resulted, for Alcott and for the moderns, a close cooperation between home and school, and a bringing the world into the classroom and the child into the world. And both Bronson Alcott and today's progressives have experienced rejection at the hands of a fact-ridden age.

Shall we claim, then, that Bronson Alcott is the father of progressive education? Hardly that. Or rather, such a claim would be justified only if Socrates, Plato, Jesus, Pestalozzi, and all great teachers were called the forerunners of progressivism. For the twentieth century has no monopoly on new ideas, new methods, or great teaching. In every age there have been men and women of genius, men and women who dared risk poverty and ridicule, as they broke through the perennial cake of custom and presented to each new age quickening truths, old as time but newly discovered. It is impossible to trace, or to estimate accurately the incalculable stimuli that the thinkers of one age bequeath to those of the next.

Whether or not there exists any direct connection between the work of Bronson Alcott and the modern "progressives," this much is sure. Bronson Alcott was the man who swept out of the schoolroom the Calvinistic ideas of the nature of children with the consequent repression and harsh

discipline. He suffered the usual fate of the reformer, but his work without doubt hastened the change, inevitable as society and religion changed. Without Bronson Alcott as a catalytic agent, the progressives would not have had a base from which to start.

In spite of many resemblances between the ideas and practices of Alcott and the progressives, however, they differ in one important respect. If Alcott could see the schools of today, he would, without question, admire the pleasant, well-equipped new buildings; he would approve the friendly atmosphere in the classrooms and the free methods of teaching, but he would find the modern schools lacking in spirituality. Educators of the twentieth century are almost as earnestly concerned with the development of character as Alcott was, but they are putting their trust in fostering right relations with their fellowmen, in "appreciation of national ideals," in "realization of the interdependence of peoples," and in "international good will." Education today treats the child "as a creature of time and space, all unaware of its spiritual descent and destiny." Who shall say that Alcott was not right in his spiritual emphasis? Who can say that even the aim of promoting harmonious relationships among men, ameliorating conditions of vice, poverty, and disease, cannot be attained by developing the spiritual nature of men? Even if one eliminates preparation for an after-life, and concentrates upon creating men capable of right feeling, right thinking, and right acting, can Alcott's suggestion be disregarded? Can good men best be developed by fostering international-mindedness, or by fostering the divine spark of goodness in each, by relating that to the source of power and life? Brotherhood among men is the aim of the present; brotherhood in God was Alcott's quest.

Bronson Alcott had a calm faith that a later age would appreciate his worth. Perhaps he was right. As one looks at him from a distance his idiosyncrasies disappear, and his

long years of preaching the gospel of the child loom high and majestic. He left behind no dogma, no system. He left only the "observations" of a philosopher who could penetrate better than most to the spirit of childhood.

APPENDIX A

THE WRITINGS OF A. BRONSON ALCOTT IN MANUSCRIPT

Autobiographical Collections, 10 vols.

Autobiography, 1834

Commonplace Book, 1833

Correspondence

Index, 1800-1850

Journals, 58 vols.

Letters, 20 vols.

Memoir, 1878

Observations on Childhood, 3 vols.

Papers on Education

Psyche, 1838

Western Itineraries, 3 vols.

A CHRONOLOGICAL CHECKLIST OF A. BRONSON ALCOTT'S WRITINGS, WHICH PERTAIN TO EDUCATION *

- 1826 A., "On the Education of Children," *The Churchman's Magazine*, IV (March, 1826), 369 f.
- 1827 "Morris Academy," *The Connecticut Observer*, August 20, 1827.
- 1828 "Primary Education. Account of the Method of Instruction in the Primary School No. 1 of Cheshire, Connecticut," *American Journal of Education*, III (January, 1828), 26-31; III (February, 1828), 86-94. "Elementary Instruction," *American Journal of Education*, III (June, 1828), 369-374; III (July, 1828), 440-443.

* Identification of many of these references has been made through comments in the Journals. Very minor articles, in which Alcott's part was merely that of compiler, have been included, for they do at least show what he was reading. Brackets indicate that the article is unsigned.

- 1828 [], "Review of Prospectus of Morris Academy, Litchfield, (South Farms), Connecticut," *American Journal of Education*, III (July, 1828), 420-426.
- [], "Education of Infant Children," *American Journal of Education*, III (July, 1828), 412-415; III (August, 1828), 454-460.
- [], "Infant School Society in Boston," *American Journal of Education*, III (September, 1828), 561-568.
- [], "Review of 'Observations on the Establishment and Direction of Infant Schools,' by the Rev. Charles Mayo, London, 1827," *American Journal of Education*, III (October, 1828), 610-617.
- [], "Elementary Instruction," *American Journal of Education*, III (November, 1828), 693-698.
- [], "Maternal Instruction," *The Unitarian Advocate*, I, Boston, 1828, 304-308.
- 1829 [], "Maternal Instruction," being a review of *Hints to Parents*, *American Journal of Education*, IV (January, 1829), 53-58.
- [], "Salem Street Infant School," *Daily Advertiser*, March 6, 1829.
- [], "Pestalozzi's Principles and Methods of Instruction," *American Journal of Education*, IV (March-April, 1829), 97-107.
- 1830 *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction*, Boston, Carter, Hendee, and Company, 1830, 27 pp.
- 1832 [], "Principles and Methods of Intellectual Instruction Exhibited in the Exercises of Young Children," *Annals of Education*, II (January, 1832), 52-56; II (November, 1832), 565-570; III (May, 1833), 219-223.
- 1833 [], "Maternal Influence," *Annals of Education*, III (January, 1833), 16-24.
- On the Nature and Means of Early Intellectual Education*, as Deduced from Experience, Boston, Carter, Hendee and Company, 1833, 37 pp.
- 1835* [Elizabeth P. Peabody], *Record of a School*, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, James Munroe and Company, 1835, 208 pp.

* Both Alcott and Miss Peabody were accustomed to refer to these volumes as theirs.

- 1836* [Elizabeth P. Peabody], *Record of a School*, Second Edition, Boston, Russell, Shattuck and Company, 1836, 198 pp.
 Preface and Key to the Emblems of Carové's *Story without an End*, Translated by Sarah Austin, Boston, Joseph H. Francis, 1836, 123 pp.
Conversations with Children on the Gospels, Boston, James Munroe and Company, 1836, I, 264 pp.
The Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture, Boston, James Munroe and Company, 1836, 27 pp.
- 1837 *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, Boston, James Munroe and Company, 1837, II, 274 pp.
- 1840 [], "Orphic Sayings," *The Dial*, I (July, 1840), 85-98;
 1841 I (January, 1841), 351-361.
 [], Editor, *Spiritual Culture*; or, Thoughts for the Consideration of Parents and Teachers, Boston, Joseph Dowe, 1841, 108 pp.
- 1842 [], "Days from a Diary," *The Dial*, II (April, 1842), 409-437.
- 1860 *Reports of the School Committee and the Superintendent to*
 1865 *of the Schools of the Town of Concord, Mass.,*
 1866 *Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1860-1865.*
 "Schoolhouse and School of My Youth," *Barnard's American Journal of Education*, XVI (1866), 130-137.
- 1874 *Record of Mr. Alcott's School*, Third Edition, Revised, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1874, 297 pp.
- 1877 *Table Talk*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1877, 178 pp.
- 1882 *Sonnets and Canzonets*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1882, 151 pp.
- 1883 *Lectures and Remarks in Concord Lectures on Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., Moses King, 1883, 13 f., 31 f., 109 f., 129 f.

* Both Alcott and Miss Peabody were accustomed to refer to these volumes as theirs.

APPENDIX B

GENERAL MAXIMS

by Which to Regulate the Instructor's practice in Instruction.¹

- I. To teach, with a sense of the accountableness of the profession.
- II. To teach, with reference to Eternity
- III. To teach, as an agent of the Great Instructor.
- IV. To teach, depending on the Divine blessings, for success.
- V. To teach, as the former of character, and the promoter of the collective happiness of man.
- VI. To teach, to subserve the great cause of philanthropy, and benevolence.
- VII. To teach, distinct from all sinister, sectarian, and oppressive principles.
- VIII. To teach, with charitable feelings toward all rational and animal beings.
- IX. To teach, distinct from prejudice, from veneration of Antiquity and from excess of novelty.
- X. To teach, to improve the Science of Instruction, and of Mind.
- XI. To teach, duly appreciating the importance of the profession.
- XII. To teach, unawed by the clamours of ignorance, yet governed by the dictates of wisdom.
- XIII. To teach nothing, merely from subservience to custom.
- XIV. To teach with unremitted solicitude, and faithfulness.
- XV. To teach, appreciating the value of the beings to whom Instruction is given.
- XVI. To teach, regarding the matter as well as the manner of Instruction.
- XVII. To teach that, alone, which is *useful*.
- XVIII. To teach, in imitation of the Saviour.
- XIX. To teach, by exact, uniform example.
- XX. To teach in the Inductive method.

¹ Alcott Journals, 1826-27.

- XXI. To teach gradually, and understandingly, by the shortest steps, from the more easy, and known, to the more difficult and unknown.
- XXII. Teach by the exercise of Reason
- XXIII. Teach, illustrating by sensible and tangible objects
- XXIV. To teach, by clear, and copious Explanation
- XXV. To teach, by a strict adherence to System
- XXVI. To teach, by simple, and plain, unambiguous language.
- XXVII. To teach, by short, and perfectly obtained, Lessons.
- XXVIII. To teach, by Encouragement.
- XXIX. Teach but one thing at the same time.
- XXX. Teach interestingly.
- XXXI. Teach principally a Knowledge of things, not of words:— of ideas; not names.
- XXXII. To teach, by consulting in the arrangement of lessons, that proportion of variety, which is adapted to the genius and habits of the young mind.
- XXXIII. To teach, by keeping curiosity awake.
- XXXIV. To teach nothing that pupils can teach themselves.
- XXXV. To teach, as much as possible by Analysis.
- XXXVI. To teach, by exciting a laudable ambition for excellence, guarding against its opposite.
- XXXVII. To teach, endeavouring to make pupils feel their importance, by the hope which mankind placed in their conduct.
- XXXVIII. To teach, endeavouring to preserve the understanding from implicit belief, and to secure the habit of independence of thought and of feeling.
- XXXIX. To teach, endeavouring to invigorate and bring into exercise all the intellectual and moral and physical powers.
- XL. To teach, attempting to associate with literature the idea, and perception of pleasure
- XLI. To teach, attempting to induce the laudable ambition of progressive improvement.
- XLII. To teach, by consulting the feelings of scholars.
- XLIII. To teach, with animation and interest.
- XLIV. To teach, by furnishing constant, useful, and as much as possible, pleasing employment.
- XLV. To teach, treating pupils with uniform familiarity, and patience, and with the greatest kindness, tenderness, and respect.

- XLVI. To teach, by cultivating the moral and sympathetic feelings and affections.
- XLVII. Teach, by consulting the collective happiness of the school.
- XLVIII. Teach, by persuasion, not by coercion.
- XLIX. To teach, by Comparison and Contrast.
 - L. To teach, by allusion to familiar objects, and occurrences.
 - LI. To teach, without Indolence, and Discouragement.
 - LII. To teach pupils to teach themselves.
 - LIII. Teach, by intermingling Questions with Instruction.
 - LIV. To teach, with relation to the practical business of life.
 - LV. To teach, endeavouring to fix *things* in the understanding—rather than words in the memory.
 - LVI. To teach, without bringing pupils in comparison with one another, or touching the spring of personal emulation.
 - LVII. To teach, with reference to Habit.
 - LVIII. To teach, with independence.

PROHIBITIONS

It is required of pupils, that they comply with the following regulations, viz.:

- I. That they do not fail, without giving a reasonable excuse, of being at the School Room by 15 minutes past 9 A.M. and by 15 minutes past 2 P.M.
- II. That they do not omit, on entrance, in good order, to arrange their Books
- III. That they do not, in any manner, intentionally deface their own Books, nor those of others.
- IV. That they do not dirty, deface, or scatter any object, in or near the School Room, which is offensive, or indelicate.
- V. That they address no one, in time of School, but the Instructor.
- VI. That, in all their Lessons, they articulate in such a voice as to be distinctly heard, at any part of the School Room.
- VII. That they do not, with intention, unnecessarily interrupt, or retard, the studies of others.
- VIII. That they do not attempt, in time of School, by any means, to communicate, to each other, ideas.
- IX. That they do not study, so as to be heard, to the annoyance of others.

- X. That, in time of any general Recitation, they keep their Books closed, and slates unseen.
 - XI. That they do not, during any general exercise, engage in any employment, which may turn their own, or the attention of others, from the subject of general pursuit.
 - XII. That, in time of School, they do not partake of any food, fruit, or refreshment, without the Instructor's permission.
 - XIII. That they never indulge themselves in using the word *Can't*.
 - XIV. That, on neglecting to get their lessons accurately, they offer a reasonable excuse.
 - XV. That they never, in any manner, violate, intentionally, the course of instruction.
 - XVI. That, in time of School, they do not, without permission, peruse any Book, disconnected from the subjects of their studies.
 - XVII. That, no two scholars, having the same kind of Book, look on that Book, at the same time.
 - XVIII. That, without permission from the Instructor, they do not leave their seats.
 - XIX. That, they do not sit idle, lounging, or gazing about the School Room.
 - XX. That they tell no Tales.
 - XXI. That they make no object, either with pen or pencil, to excite laughter, or create disorder.
 - XXII. That, in all their movements, they endeavour to make as little noise as possible.
 - XXIII. That, on any movement, or remark of the Instructor, they do not allow themselves in remark, or laughter.
 - XXIV. That, during Recitation, or any general exercise, uniformity of position, be, as much as possible, observed.
 - XXV. That they pursue their studies in perfect silence.
 - XXVI. That they do not allow themselves in the habit of forgetfulness.
 - XXVII. That they do not, by gesture, look, or by word, endeavour to inquire the feelings of others.
 - XXVIII. That, without permission from their Parents, they be not absent from home after Sunset.
- .

APPENDIX C

School Library

List 1.

American Class Book.
Amusements of Western Heath.
American Gazeteer.
Alfred Campbell.
Advantages of useful employment in early life.
Adventures of a Bible.
Barbault's Evenings at Home. 2 vols.
Barbault's Easy Reading Lessons for Children
Barbault's Lessons for Children. 4 nos.
Barbault's Hymns for Children.
Blair's Rhetorick.
Burkhardt's Philosophy of Natural History.
Blair's Grammar of Natural Philosophy.
Buffon's Natural History.
Bartlett's Practical Reader.
Boll's Spelling Book.
Bible Lessons.
Baldwin Fables.
Boston School Primer.
Basket Woman.
Broken Flute.
Cabinet of Curiosities. 2 vols.
Classical Reader.
Cooke's Introduction to the American Orator.
Children's Friend, by Berquin.
Conversations on Common Things.
Children's Companion.
Cabinet of Nature.
Children who played with Fire.
Canary Bird.
Cock Robin. 2 nos.
Dancing Bear &c.

Elements of Useful Knowledge, I.
Inquiry into the duties of the Female Sex.
Edgeworth's Early Lessons for Children. 9 vols.
Esop's Fables.
Edgeworth and Barbauld's Lessons for Children
Friend of Youth.
Ferguson's Astronomy.
Fowle's Practical Geography.
Friendship Boy. 12 nos.
Hymns for Children.
History of R. Whittington.
House that Jack Built.
Infantine Stories.
Knapsack.
Key to Knowledge.
Kate Higgins.
Lights of Education, Vol. I.
Little Henri.
Little Flora.
Life of Dr. B. Franklin.
Little Susan and her Lamb. 12 nos.
Manners of the Great.
Murray's Spelling Book.
My Friend.
Medley.
Marmaduke Multiply. 4 parts.
Northern Regions.
New Robinson Crusoe.
Nursery Morals.
Nursery Rhymes.
New Tales for Boys.
New Tales for Girls.
New York Primer.
Orphans—An American Tale.
Popular Lessons.
Parents Assistant. 2 vols.
Poetry without Fiction.
Present for Sabbath Schools.
Present for Little Girls.
Present from New York.
Prize: or History of G. Benson

Pictured Alphabet.
Pelham's Primer.
Robins: by Mrs. Trimmer.
Rudiments of Taste.
Robert Fowle.
Robert and William.
Raven and the Dove.
Rosebud: or Cautionary Stories.
Rose Trees &. 2 nos.
Riddle Book.
Scripture Illustrations. Vol. I.
Sketches of the Earth and its Inhabitants. 2 vols.
Scenes in America.
Scenes in Europe.
Scenes in Asia.
Scenes in Home.
Story Teller.
Stories worth Telling.
Stories for Children, Mrs Plumtree.
Stories for Children, Mrs. Hughes.
Short Stories for Children.
Stories for Children.
Stories for Children in Verse.
Stories.
Sally Preston.
Storm: or Stories of Old Daniel.
Select Rhymes for the Nursery.
Snow Drop.
Sailor Boy. 2 vols.
Stories, by Mrs. Edgeworth. 17 parts.
Tooke's Pantheon.
Tales of the Pemberton Family.
Temper.
Two Pear Trees.
Trimmer's Natural History. 2 vols
Tell Tale.
Village Daughter. 2 nos.
Wood's New York Primer.
Walk in the Wood.
White Kitten.
Wish.

Young Gentlemen and Ladies Monitor.
 Youth's Natural History of Animals.

Periodical Publications

Juvenile Miscellany for 1826-7. 2 vols.
 Youth's Gazette for 1827.
 American Journal of Education for 1826-27. 2 vols.
 [182 vols.]

Slates: Pencils, etc.

Every scholar is furnished with a

Slate,
 Pencil,
 Sponge,
 Desk,
 Class-Books,
 Blocks, and Beans,

A part are supplied with—

Paper, and Writing Apparatus,

And for general use, the following are furnished:

Blocks,
 Books,
 Tangible Letters,
 Prints,
 Material Substances.

*Library for the Instructor's Use
 in conducting daily studies.*

List 2.

1. American Journal of Education.
2. Edgeworth's Practical Education.
3. Locke's Essay on Human Understanding
4. Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.
5. Cogan's Philosophical Treatise of the Passions.
6. Watts on the Improvement of the Mind.
7. Locke on the Conduct of the Understanding.
8. Owen's New View of Society.
9. Parkhurst's Moral Philosophy.
10. Carter's Letters on Popular Education.
11. Candell's Essay on Language.
12. Gisbourn's Inquiry into the duties of the Female Sex.
13. Russell's Manual of Mutual Instruction.

14. Epitome of Pestalozzian Instruction.
15. Hints to Parents.
16. Emerson's Prospectus of Female Seminary at Weatherford, Conn.
17. Crabbe's English Synonyms
18. Scriptures

Supplementary List of Books Read, List 3.
but not previously listed, between the
Commencement of Journal I, April, 1825, and January, 1827.

Dwight's Theology.
Foster's Essays.
Milton's Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century.
Darwin's Zoonomia.
Bacon's Essays.
Woolstoncraft's Rights of Women.
The Academician.
U S. Literary Gazette.
Keagy's Pestalozzian Primer.
Juvenile Miscellany.
Buchanan's Sketches of the North American Indians.
Solemn Review [?]
Russell on Composition.
Duncan's Logick.
Brown on the Philosophy of the Human Mind.
Jardine's Outlines of Philosophical Education.
Griscom's Monitorial Instruction.
Preface to Woodbridge and Willard Geography.
Edgeworth's Early Lessons.
Barbauld's Works.
Medical Intelligencer.
Teacher's Guide and Parent's Assistant.
Report of Committee on New Gate Prison
Report of Common Schools of Connecticut.
Cowper's Tirocinium.
Rudiments of Taste.
Manners of the Great.
Essays on Education in the *Columbian Register*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

Alcott Manuscripts

Autobiographical Collections, I-II (1799-1823).

These are reminiscent volumes, documented with letters, printed articles, and frontispaces of books.

Journals, XXXVI (1861), XLIV (1869), XLV (1870), LII (1876).

The pertinent material used from these volumes is of a reminiscent nature.

Printed Sources

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, *New Connecticut*, Edited by F. B. Sanborn, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1887, 247 pp.

The story of Alcott's boyhood in verse, with copious biographical notes.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], "History of a Common School," *Annals of Education*, I (October, 1831), 468-472.

My account of the Spindle Hill School is based primarily upon this description.

HENRY BARNARD, "History of Common Schools in Connecticut," *Barnard's American Journal of Education*, IV (March, 1858), 657-710; V (June, 1858), 114-154.

The standard factual account, with many quotations of laws and regulations.

JOHN GAYLORD DAVENPORT, *The Ordination Ball*, A Poem, Waterbury, Connecticut, The New England Press, 1912, 19 pp.

A description of the ball held in honor of the ordination of the Rev. Lucas Hart, third pastor of the Wolcott Society, 1811-1813.

NATHANIEL DWIGHT, *A Short but Comprehensive System of the Geography of the World*, Second Connecticut Edition, Hartford, Hudson and Goodwin, [1797?], 225 pp.

A widely-used text, which gives an interesting side light on the intellectual knowledge and belief of the period.

THEODORE DWIGHT, JR., *The History of Connecticut from the First Settlement to the Present Time*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1841, 450 pp.

Factual, and valuable as a contemporary account.

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, *Travels; in New-England and New-York*, New Haven, Published by Timothy Dwight, 1821-1822, I, IV.

An *omnium gatherum* in which events are judged by their "longitude from Yale College." Dwight's professed motive in writing his account was to vivify the past and to refute certain foreign misrepresentations. He was also interested in viewing how a depraved humanity got along in the world, and in chronicling the wonders which the hand of God hath wrought. These volumes remain in Alcott's library, handsomely rebound in calf.

JOHN FLAVEL, *A Treatise on Keeping the Heart*, Boston, Nathaniel Willis, 1813, 213 pp.

A compendium of practical suggestions for the avoidance of moral pitfalls, this is the book sold by Alcott on his first peddling trip.

[CHAUNCEY ALLEN GOODRICH], *Considerations Suggested by the Establishment of a Second College in Connecticut*, P. B. Gleason and Co., Hartford, 1824, 36 pp.

CLIFTON JOHNSON, *Old-Time Schools and School-Books*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1904, 381 pp.

The approach is conversational, rather than scholarly.

EDGAR W. KNIGHT, *Education in the United States*, Boston, New York, et al., Ginn and Company, [c1934], 613 pp.

An interpretive study, with valuable critical bibliographies at the close of each chapter.

GEORGE EMERY LITTLEFIELD, *Early Schools and School-Books of New England*, Boston, 1904, 354 pp.

JEDIDIAH MORSE, *Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgement of the American Geography*, Boston, Samuel Hall, 1791, 323 pp.

The first geography printed on the "American continent," 1784.

SAMUEL ORCUTT, *History of the Town of Wolcott (Connecticut) from 1731 to 1874*, Waterbury, Conn., Press of the American Printing Company, 1874, 608 pp.

Facts about the town of Wolcott are taken from this source.

- RICHARD J. PURCELL, *Connecticut in Transition, 1775-1818*, Washington: American Historical Association, London: Oxford University Press, 1918, 471 pp.
Indispensable for any religious, educational, economic, or political study of the period.
- FRANKLIN B. SANBORN and WILLIAM T. HARRIS, *A. Bronson Alcott; His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1893, 2 vols.
The older life of Alcott, but not to be relied upon implicitly. The "life" is by Sanborn; the "philosophy" by Harris.
- ODELL SHEPARD, *Connecticut Past and Present*, New York and London, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939, 316 pp.
Here the biographer of Alcott interprets the Connecticut into which Alcott was born and in which he taught.
- ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress, The Life of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1937, 546 pp.
This biography, based upon a study of the entire Alcott manuscript collection, must be the standard reference both for fact and for interpretation. The first two chapters contain a full account of these early years of Alcott's life.
- ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1938, 559 pp.
The description of the early church-going is based upon the Journal entry for June 15, 1873, quoted here pp. 435-437.
- WALTER HERBERT SMALL, *Early New England Schools*, Boston and London, Ginn and Company, 1914, 401 pp.
- BERNARD C. STEINER, "The History of Education in Connecticut," *Bureau of Education Circular of Information*; No. 2, Washington, 1893, 300 pp.
This study consists chiefly of illustrated articles upon institutions of higher learning in Connecticut.

CHAPTER II

Alcott Manuscripts

Autobiographical Collections, III (1823-1834).

Journals, I (1826-1827).

This volume is concerned almost exclusively with the Cheshire School.

Journals, II (1827-1828).

The first part describes the Bristol School of 1827-1828.

Journals, XLVIII (1873), LV (1879), LVI (1880), LVII (1880-1881).

Miscellaneous references to this period are found in these volumes.

Printed Sources

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, "Elementary Instruction," *American Journal of Education*, III (June, 1828), 369-374; (July, 1828), 440-443.

A detailed account of Alcott's methods of teaching school subjects.

[A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Maternal Instruction," being a review of *Hints to Parents*, *American Journal of Education*, IV (January, 1829), 53-58.

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, "Primary Education, Account of the Method of Instruction in the Primary School No. 1 of Cheshire, Connecticut," *American Journal of Education*, III (January, 1828), 26-31; III (February, 1828), 86-94.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], "Biography of a Teacher," *Annals of Education*, II (May, 1832), 257-259.

The article refers to Bronson Alcott.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], *Confessions of a School Master*, Andover, New York, Gould, Newman and Saxton, 1839, 316 pp.

Illustrative of Dr. Alcott's early career as a teacher, and of general conditions as well.

WILLIAM A. ALCOTT, *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses*, Boston, Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins [etc.], 1832, 66 pp.

This article won the prize offered by the American Institute of Instruction, August, 1831.

HENRY BARNARD, *Pestalozzi and Pestalozzianism*, Reprinted from the *American Journal of Education*, New York, F. C. Brownell, 1859, 468 pp.

The life, educational principles, and methods of Pestalozzi, with biographical sketches of several of his assistants and disciples, and extracts from his works.

- JOSEPH PERKINS BEACH, *History of Cheshire, Connecticut*, from 1694 to 1840, Published by Lady Fenwick Chapter, D. A. R., Cheshire, Connecticut, 1912, 574 pp.
Boston Recorder and Telegraph, May 11, 1827.
An account of the new school society in Hartford with particular reference to Alcott.
- EDWIN R. BROWN, *Old Historic Homes of Cheshire, Connecticut*, New Haven, C. H. Ryder, 1895, 138 pp.
While in Cheshire, Alcott lived in the house pictured as No. 57, p. 113, then occupied by Josiah Talmadge. The house later burned.
- JAMES G. CARTER, *Essays upon Popular Education*, Boston, Bowles and Dearborn, 1826, 60 pp.
Reminders of the serious neglect of the public schools, concluding with a plan for the training of teachers.
- JAMES G. CARTER, *Letters to the Honorable William Prescott, LL.D.*, on the Free Schools of New England, with Remarks upon the Principles of Instruction, Boston, Cummings, Hilliard and Company, 1824, 123 pp.
One of the best pictures of New England education in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.
Connecticut Observer, May 7, 1827.
An account of the excellence of Alcott's school is found here.
- "DR. WILLIAM A. ALCOTT," Biographical Sketch in Samuel Orcutt, *History of the Town of Wolcott*, 265-277.
- "DR. WILLIAM A. ALCOTT," Barnard's *American Journal of Education*, IV (March, 1858), 629-656.
- MARIA EDGEWORTH and RICHARD LOVELL EDGEWORTH, *Practical Education*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1835, 549 pp.
Unlike most of the books on Alcott's list, this one was written, not to fit a theory, but to give practical assistance based on common sense and experience.
- RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Journals*, Edited by E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910-1914, 10 vols.
For reference to the originality of Alcott's mind see V, 51; VI, 177 f., 240.

WILLIAM B. FOWLE, "Gymnastic Education for Females," [From *The Medical Intelligencer*], *American Journal of Education*, I (November, 1826), 698 f.

The Editor suggests that as the term gymnastic is connected with an idea of coarseness, it might be well to designate this department by the phrase *hygeian exercise*.

Hints to Parents on the Cultivation of Children, in the Spirit of Pestalozzi's Method, Fifth Edition, London, 1827, 112 pp. Part I succeeds in conveying excellently the spirit of Pestalozzi's method, while Part II gives exercises for strengthening the thinking powers of children by this system.

HERMANN KRUSI, *A Coup-D'Oeil on the General Means of Education*, Followed by a Notice of a New Institution for Young Boys, Yverdun, Is. Fiva, Printer, 1818, 46 pp.

The volume in Alcott's library is annotated, first in the hand of the early years, and later, as though it were being edited for reprinting.

HERMANN KRUSI, *Pestalozzi: His Life, Work, and Influence*, Cincinnati, New York, Van Antwerp, Bragg and Company, 1875, 248 pp.

The value of the book is augmented by the fact that the author was the son of one of Pestalozzi's collaborators, and was himself an early Pestalozzian teacher in this country.

WILLIAM MACLURE, "An Epitome of the Improved Pestalozzian System of Education," *The American Journal of Science and Arts*, X (February, 1826), 145-151.

S. J. MAY, "Errors in Common Education," *American Journal of Education*, IV (May-June, 1829), 213-225.

An address delivered at the Lyceum, in Brooklyn, Connecticut, October 22, 1828.

WILL S. MONROE, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States*, Syracuse, New York, C. W. Bardeen, 1907, 244 pp.

Sketchy, inaccurate, and generally unreliable.

ROBERT OWEN, *A New View of Society: or, Essays on the Formation of the Human Character*, Cincinnati, Luman Watson, 1825, 144 pp.

The possible influence of Owen's doctrines upon reform movements of the nineteenth century has yet to be fully estimated.

SAMUEL CHESTER PARKER, *A Textbook in the History of Modern Elementary Education*, Ginn and Company, Boston, New York, et al., 1912, 505 pp.

A good treatment of Pestalozzian principles.

WILLIAM RUSSELL, *Manual of Mutual Instruction*, Boston, Wait, Greene, and Company, 1826, 121 pp.

Mr. Fowle's directions for introducing the monitorial system, together with some considerations in its favor, and a sketch of its progress.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN, "A. Bronson Alcott," Biographical Sketch in Samuel Orcutt, *History of the Town of Wolcott*, 238-264

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN, "A. Bronson Alcott," *Barnard's American Journal of Education*, XXVII (April, 1877), 225-236.

This is condensed from the account in Orcutt's *History of Wolcott*, but adds several details.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN and WILLIAM T. HARRIS, *A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1893, Chapters III, IV.

ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1937, "Country Schoolmaster," 75-111.

ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1938, 559 pp.

Brief selections for this period illustrate Alcott's thinking.

A SCHOOL VISITOR, "Remarks on the State of Common Schools in Connecticut," *Connecticut Observer*, January 25; February 8, 15; March 1, 22; April 12, 1825.

Various aspects of the schools are discussed, physical conditions, teaching methods, moral training; and the need for reform in each is demonstrated.

CHAPTER III

Alcott Manuscripts

Journals, II (1828).

Emphasis in this volume is almost equally divided between the theory of infant instruction, sermons, and people and events of Boston.

--
Journals, III (1829).

Details concerning Alcott's Common Street School are noticeably absent. Visits and correspondence with his "companion" occupied most of Alcott's interest in this year.

Journals, IV (1830).

As Alcott's life became more active, this Journal has few significant passages.

Journals, V (1831).

Much information about people and events in Philadelphia and Germantown is to be found here.

Journals, VI (1832-1833).

Comments on reading, and observations on childhood occupy most of this journal.

Journals, LII (1876), LVIII (1881).

Printed Sources

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, *Daily Advertiser*, March 6, 1829.

Account of procedure in the Salem Street School, with prefatory remarks by William Russell.

[A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Education of Infant Children," *American Journal of Education*, III (July, August, 1828), 412-415; 454-460.

Really extracts from "An Exposition of the Principles on which the System of Infant Education is Conducted," Second Philadelphia Edition, Philadelphia, 1827. The pamphlet, which Alcott later says was written by Greaves, was given by Matthew Carey to Alcott upon his visit to Philadelphia in 1828.

[A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Elementary Instruction," *American Journal of Education*, III (November, 1828), 693-698.

Consists chiefly of part of the Introduction to John M. Keagy's *Pestalozzian Primer*.

[A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Infant School Society in Boston," *American Journal of Education*, III (September, 1828), 561-568.

[A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Maternal Instruction," *The Unitarian Advocate*, Boston, I, 1828, 304-308.

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, *Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction*, Boston, Carter and Hendee, 1830, 27 pp.

A clear exposition of Alcott's theories of infant education.

- A. BRONSON ALCOTT, "Principles and Methods of Intellectual Instruction Exhibited in the Exercises of Young Children," *Annals of Education*, II (January, 1832), 52-56, II (November, 1832), 565-570; III (May, 1833), 219-223.
- [A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Review of 'Observations on the Establishment and Direction of Infant Schools,' by the Rev. Charles Mayo, London, 1827," *American Journal of Education*, III (October, 1828), 610-617.
 Alcott's remarks form a valuable commentary on his own theories and practice. Quotation, p. 614.
American Journal of Education, I (1826), II (1827), III (1828), *passim*.
 Valuable source material for the history of the infant school movement in this country.
- E. BACON, *Infants School Teacher's Guide*, Philadelphia, published by the author, 1829, 142 pp.
 By means of questions and answers the theory of infant schools and lessons for use in them are set forth. No claim is made for originality, as the book is based upon those of Wilderspin, Goyder, Wilson, Brown, and Pestalozzi.
- [MRS. BETHUNE], *Infant Education*, New York, 1827, 108 pp.
 An account of some of the infant schools in England, together with selections and abridgements from the works of Wilderspin, Goyder, and others, adapted to the use of infant schools in America.
- DAVID GEORGE GOYDER, *A Treatise on the Management of Infant Schools*, London, Thomas Goyder, 1826, 67 pp.
 This book, as well as Wilson, Wilderspin, Brown, and Higgins, was read by Alcott in preparation for his infant school.
- EDWARD EVERETT HALE, *A New England Boyhood*, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1900, 500 pp.
 Interesting sidelights on Boston and the Hale family.
- P. L. H. HIGGINS, *An Exposition of the Principles on which the Infant System of Education is Conducted*, London, Thomas Goyder, 1826, 46 pp.
- CHARLES GODFREY LELAND, *Memoirs*, London, William Heinemann, 1893, I.
 A decidedly uncomplimentary reminiscence of Alcott's school in Philadelphia is included in the account of Leland's childhood.

THE REV. CHARLES MAYO, *Observations on the Establishment and Direction of Infant Schools*, London, L. B. Seeley and Sons, 1827, 24 pp.

THOMAS J. MUMFORD, Editor, *Memoir of Samuel Joseph May*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1873, 297 pp.

The volume is partly autobiographical, partly reminiscences of friends. May's outstanding service in many fields merits a complete biography.

[ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], "Account of a Visit to an Elementary School," *American Journal of Education*, IV (January, 1829), 74-76.

Vivid description of a morning in Alcott's school.

[ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], *Record of a School*, Boston, James Monroe and Company, 1835, 205-208.

Extracts of unedited free composition of pupils in Alcott's Philadelphia schools.

WILLIAM RUSSELL, *Address on Infant Schools*, Delivered at the Request of the Managers of the Infant School Society, Boston, Hiram Tupper, Printer, 1829, 18 pp.

WILLIAM RUSSELL, "Education of Infants," *Christian Teachers Manual*, 1828, 33-41.

WILLIAM RUSSELL, "On the Infant School System," *The Introductory Discourse and Lectures*, Delivered in Boston, before the Convention of Teachers and Other Friends of Education, Assembled to Form the American Institute of Instruction, August, 1830, Boston, Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1831, 97-121.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN and WILLIAM T. HARRIS, *A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1893, I, Chapter IV.

ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1937, 112-138.

ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1938, 559 pp.

SAMUEL WILDERSPIN, *Infant Education*, Third Edition, London, W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1825, 288 pp.

In addition to the system used at Spitalfields, the book has valuable information concerning other schools already established.

SAMUEL WILDERSPIN, *On the Importance of Educating the Infant Children of the Poor*, London, T. Goyder, 1823, 184 pp.

A vivid picture of petty larceny, and major crimes committed by children is given to illustrate the need for infant schools.

WILLIAM WILSON, *A Manual of Instruction for Infants' Schools*, London, George Wilson, 1829, 288 pp.

Complete instructions telling just what to teach and how to teach it.

CHAPTER IV

Alcott Manuscripts

Autobiography, 1834.

Most of the material pertaining to William Russell is to be found in this volume and in the Journal for 1873, the year of Russell's death, though there are scattered references throughout the Journals.

Commonplace Book, 1833.

In this record of his reading, Alcott has copied significant quotations from Plato, Bacon, Coleridge, Lamb, Goethe, and others.

Journals, V (1831), VI (1832-33), IX (1836), X (1837), XI (1838), XLV (1870), XLVIII (1873), XLIX (1874).

Psyche, 1838.

This volume represented the residue of Alcott's observations on his children in search of the Soul, after five years of re-writing.

Printed Sources

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, *On the Nature and Means of Early Intellectual Education, as Deduced from Experience*, Boston, Carter, Hendee, and Co., 1833, 37 pp.

Read as a Lecture before the American Institute of Instruction in Boston, August, 1832.

[A. BRONSON ALCOTT], "Pestalozzi's Principles and Methods of Instruction," *American Journal of Education*, IV (March-April, 1829), 97-107.

This article is not of Alcott's composition; his part was the extraction and slight rearrangement of a long series in Picket's *Academician*, I, 1818-1819.

- E. BIBER, *Henry Pestalozzi, and His Plan of Education; Being an Account of his Life and Writings; with Copious Extracts from his Works, and Extensive Details Illustrative of the Practical Parts of his Method*, London, John Souter, 1831, 468 pp.

This volume is now in Alcott's library.

- [ORESTES A. BROWNSON], "Alcott on Human Culture," *The Boston Quarterly Review*, I (October, 1838), 417-432.

This account is unexcelled as a clear exposition of Bronson Alcott's philosophy.

- SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, *Aids to Reflection*, with a Preliminary Essay and Notes by James Marsh, First American, from the First London Edition, Burlington, Vermont, Chauncey Goodrich, 1829, 399 pp.

These aphorisms on moral and religious subjects enjoyed a wide vogue in this country. The "Preliminary Essay" by James Marsh, President of the University of Vermont, recommending the spiritual intuition of Coleridge as the psychological basis of Christianity in preference to the sensationalism of Locke, was as widely read as the *Aids to Reflection* proper. Edward Washburn told Emerson (1842) that at Andover they sold "shelvesful" of *Aids to Reflection* in a year.

- SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, *Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, London, Rest Fenner, 1817, 2 vols.

The twelfth and thirteenth chapters, Alcott considered to constitute an epitome of Coleridge's philosophy. He reread these many times.

- SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, *The Friend: A Series of Essays, to Aid in the Formation of Fixed Principles in Politics, Morals, and Religion, with Literary Amusements Interspersed*, First American, from the Second London Edition, Burlington, Vermont, Chauncey Goodrich, 1831, 510 pp.

The third part contains the famous essay on method, which was so admired by the thinkers of the early nineteenth century.

- OCTAVIUS BROOKS FROTHINGHAM, *Transcendentalism in New England*, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1876, 383 pp.
As Frothingham's book was published within the lifetime of several of the transcendentalists, it has some of the virtues of a contemporaneous account, yet suffers in proportion as the author was too close in point of time to be able to give an adequate estimate of the significance of the movement.
- HONORÉ WILLIS MORROW, *The Father of Little Women*, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1927, 283 pp.
- F. A. NITSCH, *A General and Introductory View of Professor Kant's Principles concerning Man, the World, and the Deity, Submitted to the Consideration of the Learned*, London, J. Downes, 1796, 134 pp.
- "PESTALOZZI," *The Academician*, I (1818-1819), 214-216; 245-246; 263-265; 283-285; 295-298; 312-314; 327-329; 345-348.
All the articles but the first were written "By a Native of Clinton County," apparently someone with a personal knowledge of Pestalozzi's work.
- JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Leonard and Gertrude*, or, A Book for the People, London, J. Mawman, 1825, 2 vols.
Alcott's signature in these volumes, now in his library, is in the hand of the early years.
- JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Letters on Early Education*, Addressed to J. P. Greaves, Esq., London, Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, *et al.*, 1827, 157 pp.
These letters are the last, and, in some respects, the fullest exposition of Pestalozzi's views.
- JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, "Letters of Pestalozzi on the Education of Infancy," *American Journal of Education*, IV (September-October, 1829), 414-432; IV (November-December, 1829), 548-555.
These letters were translated from the French version in the *Paris Journal of Education and Instruction*, whereas those in book form were taken directly from the original sermons.
- "WILLIAM RUSSELL," *Barnard's American Journal of Education*, III (March, 1857), 139-146.
A useful bibliography of work by Mr. Russell is included.
- [WILLIAM RUSSELL], "Account of a Female School," *Annals of Education*, II (April, 1832), 209-217.

A striking resemblance to Alcott's ideas is to be noted in Russell's account of his school at Germantown.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN, "Emerson and Alcott," *The Genius and Character of Emerson*, Boston, James R. Osgood and Company, 1885, 36-67.

ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1937, 137-163.

ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1938, 27-45.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, *A Treatise on the Nature of Influx: or, of the Intercourse between the Soul and Body*, Translated from the Latin by the Rev. Thomas Hartley, D.D., First American Edition, Boston, I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1794, 174 pp.

Three possibilities of explaining this relationship exist: first, body acting on spirit; second, spirit acting on body; and third, harmony between both, established at the creation. The author, having been granted the privilege of communication with angels in the spiritual world, proceeds to show the correctness of the second hypothesis, that of spiritual influx.

CHAPTER V

Alcott Manuscripts

Autobiographical Collection, IV.

All the reviews of *Conversations with Children on the Gospels* are preserved in this volume.

Autobiography, 1834.

Many papers relating to the Temple School are here, lists of pupils, letters from patrons, Margaret Fuller, Hiram Fuller, and Emerson.

Correspondence, IV.

Letters from parents and records of financial details, including the sale of Alcott's books, are included in this volume.

Index, 1800-1850.

A biographical outline of this period of Alcott's life.

Journals, IX (1836).

This volume is full of optimism, books being edited, conversations with Sunday School Teachers, need for a separate building, leisure to write, a press at command.

Journals, X (1837).

The road down—attacks on books, mob threatened, sale of furniture, temporary closing of school. All are borne with dignity but with inward wound.

Journals, XI (1838).

While waiting, ways of escape are meditated—traveling missionary of culture, writing books, moving to Concord. Record of early conversations in Lexington and Hingham.

Journals, XII (1839).

In this volume, most of the references to education were on pages which have been cut out.

Memoir, 1878.

Here are collected materials from which Bronson and Louisa Alcott hoped to write a biography of Mrs. Alcott, but it was a story they could not tell.

Printed Sources

- A. BRONSON ALCOTT, *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, Boston, James Munroe and Company, I, 1836, 264 pp.; II, 1837, 274 pp.

Based upon the life of Christ as found in the New Testament, the record of these conversations contravened the theological and moral dogmas of Boston.

- A. BRONSON ALCOTT, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture*, Boston, J. Munroe and Co., 1836, 27 pp.

Also printed as Introduction to *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, 1836.

- [WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], "Moral Education and Instruction," *Annals of Education*, VII (September, 1837), 392-398.

This article, from the pen of W. A. Alcott, refers to the necessity for "moral" or rather sex education of parents and children, as opposed to the policy of "concealment." Alcott's "Conversations on the Gospels," apart from the religious opinions, are commended as attempts to cultivate the spiritual rather than the animal nature.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], "Review of 'Record of a School,'" *Annals of Education*, V (October, 1835), 477 f.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], Review of "Record of Conversations on the Gospels, Volume I," *Annals of Education*, VII (March, 1837), 143.

In this, as in all mentions of Bronson Alcott's school, Dr. Alcott manages to condemn the religious beliefs, but to commend the principle of elevating the spiritual nature of the pupil by development from within.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], "School for Moral Culture," *Annals of Education*, VII (May, 1837), 233 f.

Insertion of Alcott's plan of studies to show the extent of intellectual instruction in his school, but with no commendation of the school as a whole.

[WILLIAM A. ALCOTT], "Story Telling in Schools," *Annals of Education*, VII (May, 1837), 217-219.

A. B. Alcott is used to illustrate the possibilities of story-telling as a natural and rational method of instructing the mind and heart.

QUEENIE M. BILBO, "Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Transcendentalist," unpublished dissertation, New York University, 1932, 198 pp.

Boston Courier, March 4, March 29, April 5, April 6, 1837.

These issues contain reviews or remarks concerning Alcott's *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*.

[ORESTES A. BROWNSON], "Alcott on Human Culture," A Review of "Conversations with Children on the Gospels," *The Boston Quarterly Review*, I (October, 1838), 417-432.

Alcott's "philosophy of Absolute," his theories of Man, of Nature, of God here find a clearer exposition than anywhere in Alcott's own writings.

JAMES SILK BUCKINGHAM, *America, Historical, Statistic, Descriptive*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1841, 2 vols.

Hiram Fuller's school is described in volume II, page 437.

JAMES ELLIOT CABOT, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1887, II.

As a source, the book forms a necessary supplement to Emerson's *Journals*.

- Christian Register*, December 31, 1836, March 4, April 29, 1837.
There are comparatively favorable reviews, comments and editorials upon Alcott and his books in this Unitarian paper.
- [JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE], "Mr. Alcott's Book and the Objections Made to It," *The Western Messenger*, III (May, 1837), 678-683.
- [JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE], "Religious Education of Children," *The Western Messenger*, III (March, 1837), 540-545.
- ARTHUR B. DARLING, *Political Changes in Massachusetts*, 1824-1848, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1925, 392 pp.
Though predominantly political, the book throws interesting sidelights on the social history of the period.
- RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Journals*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910, 1912, III (1833-1835), 509 f., 559 f.; IV (1836-1838), 69, 348-351; VIII (1849-1855), 339.
- HENRY LEHRE GREENE, "The Greene-Street School, of Providence, and Its Teachers," *Publications of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, N. S. VI (January, 1899), 199-219.
Reminiscences of one of the early pupils, based upon his diary.
- VERNON L. PARRINGTON, *Main Currents in American Thought*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927, II, 271-482.
"The Mind of New England" is the title of the section appropriate to this study. This is one of the finest pieces of intellectual history that has been written, even though one cannot agree with all the conclusions.
- [ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], *Method of Spiritual Culture*; being an Explanatory Preface to the Second Edition of *Record of a School*, Boston, Russell, Shattuck and Co., 1836, 42 pp.
- ELIZABETH P. PEABODY, "My Experience as a Teacher," *Barnard's American Journal of Education*, XXXII (1882), 721-742.
- [ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], *Record of A School*, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, James Munroe and Company, 1835, 208 pp.
Addressed chiefly to parents, this record of a school was designed to make clear to them the influence of spiritual culture in the harmonious development of children.
- [ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], *Record of A School*, Second Edition, Boston, New York, Russell, Shattuck and Co., 1836, 198 pp.

Reorganization and addition of materials make this edition the most satisfactory for general consultation.

[ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], *Record of Mr. Alcott's School*, Third Edition, Revised, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1874, 297 pp.

This edition was edited by Alcott when the school described in Louisa Alcott's books began to excite popular comment.

[ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], *Reminiscences of Rev. William Ellery Channing*, D. D., Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1880, 459 pp.

This book is illuminating to any study of Channing, Mann, Emerson, Alcott, Hawthorne, or Miss Peabody herself.

[ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], Review of "Conversations with Children on the Gospels," *The Christian Examiner*, Third Series, V (November, 1837), 252-261.

This review is very fair, recognizing the inadequacies of the conversations which were sometimes rambling, inconsequential, or absurd, but quoting sentences which contained great truths inimitably expressed. The possibilities of the method were particularly stressed.

[ELIZABETH P. PEABODY], The Author of *Record of a School*, Review of "The Way for a Child to be Saved," *The Western Messenger*, I (April, 1836), 629-648.

In reviewing this Calvinistic book on the sin of children, Miss Peabody sets forth at some length her doctrines of child nature and the modes of introducing a child to God. One or two of the paragraphs were used in the second edition of *Record of a School*, and others bear a close resemblance to ideas expressed in Alcott's Journals. The passage "I and my father are one" as applied to all men would repay close comparison.

SIDNEY S. RIDER, *Book Notes*, I (No. 10, August 18, 1883), 1; X (No. 19, September 23, 1893), 217; X (No. 20, October 7, 1893), 231.

References to Hiram Fuller's School.

RALPH L. RUSK, Editor, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1939, 6 vols.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN and WILLIAM T. HARRIS, *A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1893, I, Chapter VI.

[CATHERINE SEDGWICK], "Record of a School," *The Knickerbocker*, VII (February, 1836), 113-130.

GILBERT SELDES, *The Stammering Century*, New York, The John Day Company, 1928, 414 pp.

"Sects, cults, manias, movements, fads, religious excitements, and the relation of these to the others and to the orderly progress of America in the past hundred years, are the subject matter." A stimulating and thought-provoking work.

ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1937, 164-218.

ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1938, 45-137.

CHAPTER VI

Alcott Manuscripts

Autobiographical Collections, V.

Though the journals for this period are missing, here are extracts from Alcott's English journal, sent home in letters, as well as much printed material describing the activities of the English transcendentalists.

Journals, X (1837), XI (1838), XIII (1839), LIII (1877).

In the Alcott Manuscript Collection are three bound volumes of miscellaneous printed material. They are "Greaves Papers," pamphlets relating to Alcott House, England; "Alcott House Journals," containing *The Healthian*, and *The New Age*; and "Papers on Education," in which are bound Pestalozzi's "Letters to Greaves," Greaves' "Letters to Campbell," and most of the pamphlets relating to Alcott's educational work.

Printed Sources

A. F. BARHAM, *A, An Odd Medley of Literary Curiosities*, Part II, London, Published by the Author, 1845, 265 pp.

Contains Barham's "A Memoir of the Late James Pierrepont Greaves, Esq.," Alexander Campbell's "Memoir of J. P. Greaves," and "Letters and Extracts from the MS. Writings of James Pierrepont Greaves," Published at the Concoridium, Ham Common, Surrey, 1843.

JESSIE BONSTELLE and MARION DE FOREST, *Little Women Letters from the House of Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1914, 197 pp.

Dripping with sentiment, the book nevertheless contains the best printed collection of the children's journals and letters to their parents, as well as Christmas and birthday letters from the latter to the children.

EDNAH D. CHENEY, *Louisa May Alcott, Her Life, Letters, and Journals*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1889, 404 pp.

Consisting largely of Louisa's letters and journals, the book enables one to form a fair estimate of her life and character.

ANNIE M. L. CLARK, "The Alcotts in Harvard," *New England Magazine*, N. S. XXII (March, 1900), 173-180.

Reminiscences by a neighbor at Still River, where the Alcotts stayed briefly after Fruitlands.

The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872, Boston, James R. Osgood and Company, 1883, 2 vols.

The correspondence contains several important characterizations of Alcott on the part of both Emerson and Carlyle, in addition to Carlyle's vivid remarks on several of the English transcendentalists.

[RALPH WALDO EMERSON], "English Reformers," *The Dial*, III (October, 1842), 227-247.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Journals*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910-1912, V (1838-1841), VI (1841-1844), VII (1845-1848).

JAMES PIERREPONT GREAVES, *Letters and Extracts from the MS Writings of James Pierrepont Greaves*, Published at the Concordium, Ham Common, Surrey, 1843, 265 pp.

WILLIAM HARRY HARLAND, "Bronson Alcott's English Friends," unpublished article in the possession of Miss Clara Endicott Sears, Harvard, Mass., 58 typewritten pages.

This article is based upon manuscript material in the possession of the Oldham family in England. It consisted of some 500 letters written by Greaves, Lane, Wright, and others, as well as papers and books connected with the actual management of Alcott House. The essay appears to be accurate, and is an invaluable aid to a study of Alcott's English period, though it does not supplant other sources, as the

author was careful not to include material elsewhere available.

The Healthian, I (1843), *passim*.

A vegetarian journal, published by the Alcott House, in which are to be found various items pertinent to Alcott, such as his "Pythagorean Sayings," (p. 75), and Greaves' "Affirmations," (pp. 113-120).

EDITH HERAUD, *Memoirs of John A. Heraud*, London, George Redway, 1898, 160 pp.

A haphazard, rambling book, but the only considerable source of information about John Heraud. The book contains a number of letters from Robert Southey.

C. L. [CHARLES LANE], "A. Bronson Alcott's Works," *The Dial*, III (April, 1843), 417-454.

This essay, thanks to Henry Thoreau's editorial pruning, is considered the best short account of Alcott's work.

L. [CHARLES LANE], "James Pierrepont Greaves," *The Dial*, III (October, 1842), 247-255; III (January, 1843), 281-296.

This article constitutes the best single source concerning Greaves' theories.

CHARLES LANE, *The Law and Method in Spirit-Culture; An Interpretation of A. Bronson Alcott's Idea and Practice at the Masonic Temple, Boston*; Boston, James Munroe and Company; London, J. Green, 1843, 40 pp.

Pamphlet, reprinted from *The Dial*, April, 1843.

CHARLES LANE, *The Third Dispensation*, London, J. Pavey, 1841, 24 pp.

A short description of the "universal dispensation" which Lane hoped to inaugurate.

HARRIET MARTINEAU, *Society in America*, New York and London, Saunders and Otley, 1837, 2 vols.

American social conditions as seen by this English reformer.

CORNELIA MEIGS, *Invincible Louisa*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1933, 260 pp.

In the same vein as Louisa's "moral pap for the young." Good pictorial illustrations.

HONORÉ WILLIS MORROW, *The Father of Little Women*, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1927, 283 pp.

A sentimental account of Bronson Alcott's educational career, written under the incubus of Louisa's fame. The

quotations are emended to suit Mrs. Morrow's literary taste, and many fictional incidents are indistinguishable from actual happenings.

Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Boston, Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1852, 2 vols.

Volume I contains several illuminating references to Alcott and his school.

The New Age, and Concordium Gazette, I (1843), *passim*.

Successor to *The Healthian*. Among the interesting items in this magazine are letters written by Charles Lane from America.

ELIZABETH P. PEABODY, *Reminiscences of Rev. William Ellery Channing, D.D.*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1880, 459 pp.

ISAAC PITMAN, Editor, *A Memorial of Francis Barham*, London, Fred Pitman, 1873, 493 pp.

Aside from the first sixty pages, this book is printed in the phonetic alphabet. It contains Barham's Memoir of James P. Greaves and a Prospectus of the London Aesthetic Institution, pp. 170-183.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN, *A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1893, II, Chapters VIII, IX.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN, *Bronson Alcott at Alcott House, England, and Fruitlands, New England* (1842-1844), Cedar Rapids, Iowa, The Torch Press, 1908, 103 pp.

Though disappointing, the monograph is nevertheless helpful in explaining these little-known periods of Bronson Alcott's life.

CLARA ENDICOTT SEARS, *Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915, 185 pp.

Miss Sears, the present owner of Fruitlands, has arranged an accurate and faithful series of quotations. Apart from Bronson Alcott's *Journals*, the volume forms the most reliable source concerning the Fruitlands venture.

ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1937, 219-403.

ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1938, 559 pp.

HENRY GARDINER WRIGHT, *Marriage and Its Sanctions*, London, D. Cousins, 1840, 9 pp.

- HENRY GARDINER WRIGHT, "My First Interview with James Pierrepont Greaves," *The New Age, and Concordium Gazette*, I (December 1, 1843), 135-138.
- MR. [HENRY] and MISS WRIGHT, *Retrospective Sketch of an Educational Attempt, at Alcott House*, Ham Common, near Richmond, Surrey, London, V. Torres and Co., 1840, 7 pp.
- HENRY GARDINER WRIGHT, *What, When, Where, and How; or, Subjective Education*, London, Strange, 1842, 40 pp.

CHAPTER VII

Alcott Manuscripts

Journals, XVI (Miscellaneous Papers to replace Journals, 1840-1846); XXII (1847); XXV (1850); XXVII (1852); XXVIII (1853); XXXI (1856); XXXV (1860), XXXVI (1861); XXXIX (1864); XLI (1866); XLV (1870); XLVI (1871); XLVII (1872); XLIX (1874); LII (1876); LVIII (1881).

Printed Sources

- [A. BRONSON ALCOTT], *Record of Mr. Alcott's School*, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1874, 297 pp.
- Concord School Reports, 1860-1866.*
Reports of the School Committee and the Superintendent of the Schools of the Town of Concord, Mass., for the Year 1859-60, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1860, 45 pp.
 This Report was highly praised by Henry Barnard.
Reports of the School Committee and the Superintendent of the Schools of the Town of Concord, Mass., 1860-61, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1861, 78 pp.
 Of this report, one thousand copies were printed for distribution. Its completeness and originality make it a valuable document.
Reports of the School Committee and the Superintendent of the Schools of the Town of Concord, Mass., 1861-62, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1862, 48 pp.
Reports of the School Committee and the Superintendent of the Schools of the Town of Concord, Mass., 1862-63, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1863, 19 pp.

Annual Report of the School Committee of the Town of Concord, Mass., 1863-64, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1864, 24 pp.

Alcott's report is incorporated with that of the Committee. *Reports of the School Committee and the Superintendent of the Schools of the Town of Concord, Mass., 1864-65*, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1865, 16 pp.

Annual Report of the School Committee of the Town of Concord, 1865-66, Concord, Benjamin Tolman, 1866, 15 pp. This report contains an explanation of Alcott's failure to be re-elected.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Journals*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912, VII (1845-1848); VIII (1849-1855).

GEORGE E. HAEFNER, *Educational Theories and Practices of A. Bronson Alcott*, New York, no publisher, 1937, 130 pp. A Columbia University dissertation, done without reference to the Journals.

WILLIAM T. HARRIS, "The Philosophy of Bronson Alcott and the Transcendentalists," in Sanborn, *Memoir*, II, Chapter XIII, 544-664.

Attempting to make clear Alcott's philosophy in the abstruse terms of the German transcendentalists, Harris has obscured what clarity it originally had and has made it quite incomprehensible.

MASSACHUSETTS, *The General Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Relating to the Public Schools, with the Alterations and Amendments to 1868*, Boston, Wright and Potter, 1868, 55 pp.

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, together with the *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board*, Boston, William White, 1861. The General Statutes of Massachusetts regarding public education are included in this report, with explanations by the Secretary of the Board.

FRANKLIN B. SANBORN, *The Life of Henry David Thoreau*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917, 541 pp.

- FRANKLIN B. SANBORN and WILLIAM T. HARRIS, *A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy*, Boston, Robert Brothers, 1893, II, Chapters IX, X, XI, XII.
- ODELL SHEPARD, *Pedlar's Progress*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1937, 421-522.
- ODELL SHEPARD, Editor, *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1938, 559 pp.
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